OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

MSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ... | MOBILE

The Hit Squad

COMPLETING THE COLLECTION

MARKING THE PRIORITY TARGETS ON OCEAN'S PRESTIGIOUS BUDGET LABEL



ENTER THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

GRUESOME GUIDE TO THE CLASSIC COIN-OP AND TROUBLED SATURN PORT

MARAUDER: INSIDE HEWSON'S 8-BIT HIT

MARK KELLY AND STEVE CROW ON THE ORIGIN OF THEIR TOP-DOWN SHOOTER

CREATING THE 2600 CLASSIC, FROSTBITE

STEVE CARTWRIGHT REVEALS THE CREATION OF HIS FANTASTIC FROGGER CLONE

DOUBLE DRAGON

ALL THE BEST MOMENTS FROM THE CLASSIC TECHNOS ARCADE BRAWLER

BULLFROG'S GLENN CORPES

FROM POPULOUS TO MAGIC CARPET: MAKING MAGICAL MASTERPIECES WITH MISTER MOLYNEUX

NINTENDO'S 3D GAME-CHANGER

INDUSTRY ALL-STARS RECALL THE IMPACT **SUPER MARIO 64** HAD ON THE GALAXY



STARRING IN THIS ISSUE

15 YEARS OF GAMECUBE

AMSTRAD CPC 6128 PLUS

THE STORY OF THOR

DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
IMAGINE PUBLISHING
ISSUE 160

THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE GAMECUBE GAME



DARRAN JONES

Resident Evil 4. When I first saw it demoed whilst working for **games™**, I looked beneath the table as I couldn't believe a GameCube was running it.
Expertise:
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
Lego Jurassic Park
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



NICK THORPE

F-Zero GX, for sure. It's an absolute masterpiece that still gets the adrenaline going like nothing else.
Expertise:
Owning five Master Systems (I sold two)
Currently playing:
The House Of The Dead
Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



LUKE ALBIGÉS

Ribbit King. It's literally the best Frolf game ever made.
Expertise:
Carrying Drew through *Destiny* Raids
Currently playing:
Monster Hunter Generations
Favourite game of all time:
Micro Machines 2: Turbo Tournament



DREW SLEEP

Metroid Prime. Sorry *Smash Bros. Melee*, I love you but *Prime* is just perfect in every way possible.
Expertise:
Being Luke's own personal hero and medic in *Destiny*
Currently playing:
Monster Hunter Generations
Favourite game of all time:
Rocket Knight Adventures



SAM RIBBITS

I'm going to cheat a little bit here – as a GBA nut, I loved playing games like *Fire Emblem* and *Advance Wars* via the Cube's Game Boy Player.
Expertise:
Pixels
Currently playing:
Popeye's Beach Volleyball
Favourite game of all time:
Croc: The Legend Of The Gobbos



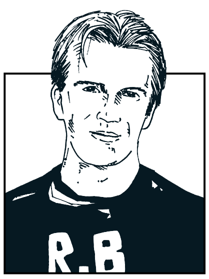
PAUL DRURY

Super Monkey Ball would be one of my Desert Island Disks. A beautifully simple and infinitely engaging game.
Expertise:
Randy Fromm's Arcade School curriculum
Currently playing:
Hue
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



MARTYN CAROLL

Resident Evil 4, the classic GameCube original. I remember importing it from the US as the wait for the PAL release over here was agonising.
Expertise:
Sinclair stuff
Currently playing:
Firewatch
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



RICHARD BURTON

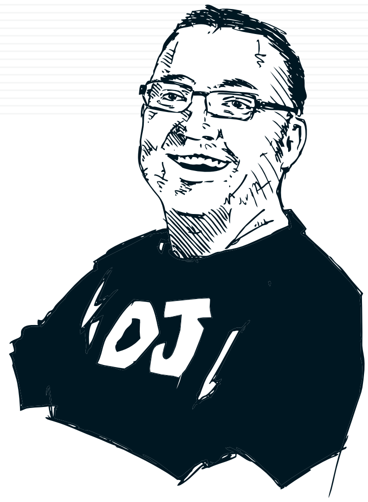
Ikaruga, an old school vertical shoot-'em-up featuring two colours, which you can switch between at will. It's a chaotic hail of bullets game that is simple, yet fiendishly inventive.
Expertise:
Time travel
Currently playing:
Fall Guy Remastered
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



JASON KELK

I do love *Mario Kart: Double Dash* but my favourite just has to be *Ikaruga*...
Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero
Currently playing:
Witch-Bot Meglilo
Favourite game of all time:
Io

LOADING...



I've had this cover in my head for absolutely ages now, so it's great to see it as a reality. Like many others at the time, I was absolutely blown away when I had my first encounter with *Super Mario 64*. I'd read the reviews of course, I heard all the accolades that had been thrown about by everyone that had already played the game, but it still couldn't prepare me for just how good Nintendo's game actually was.

Yes there had been 3D games before, as far back as systems like the Spectrum (I still remember my first thrilling encounter with *Driller* for example) but they couldn't hold a candle to Nintendo's game. The sense of freedom in *Super Mario 64* was unique at the time, while its structure was incredibly well realised. So many developers during those early 3D days would make gigantic sprawling stages that were devoid of life. Nintendo opted for more compact stages that were filled with all sorts of clever challenges. *Super Mario 64*'s impact was immense and we've spoken to a number of developers who were influenced by the groundbreaking release.

If you're not a fan of Mario, then don't worry as we've lots of great stuff, including a look at *The Hit Squad* budget label, the making of *Frostbite* and the *Tex Murphy* series, as well as *The House Of The Dead*, *The Story Of Thor* and much, much more.

Enjoy the magazine!





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>> Load 160 Breathing new life into classic games

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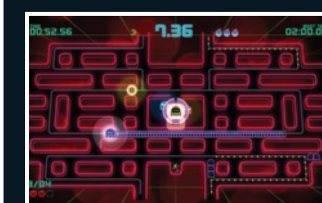


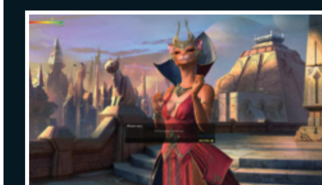
"For the Saturn we had to chop down the meshes, and by today standards would appear primitive"





REVIEWS





ESSENTIALS







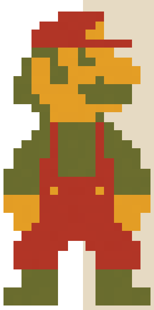


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- ☑ Become eligible for exclusive competitions & free gifts



Hi everybody. Here at **Retro Gamer**, we're amazingly passionate about making the best magazine possible for you every month. The easiest way to do that, of course, is to listen to what you want. With that in mind, we've put together a short, three-minute survey that will allow your voices to be heard. We look forward to your ideas.





Darran Jones
Editor





It's quick and easy to take the survey on any device

Only takes 3 mins!

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Have your say

Gain a place on our reader panel, giving you regular input on the magazine

Step 1 Complete survey → **Step 2** Get involved → **Step 3** Earn rewards

Complete our survey & join the team today

retrogamer.net/survey2016

Four changes you asked for in 2015…

Last year we used your input to make some fantastic improvements, including…

1 Reader Interaction

We know our readers love to be involved, so we've made sure that's the case, both online and via social media services



2 Better Access

We've thrown the retro net out wide to catch many new developers that have never been interviewed in the magazine before

3 Balanced coverage

It's clear that our readers love all eras of retro, from the Spectrum to the PS2, so we've tweaked our features accordingly



4 Great Features

We've improved our cover features to ensure that they cover every aspect of the featured game, no matter how obscure

retroradar

GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



CONTENTS

FLASHBACK TO THE FUTURE

AtGames prepares brand-new Atari plug-and-play machines

The plug-and-play console market has been around for a long time, but it has rarely been as hot as it is right now. The announcement of the Nintendo Classic Mini: Nintendo Entertainment System has prompted a surge of interest in retro gaming plug-and-play consoles, and all manufacturers are taking advantage of the extra focus this has brought to their products – a wide variety of devices based on retro classics will be fighting for the nostalgia spend over the holidays. One of the most experienced companies in the market is AtGames, which is responsible for the Sega Mega Drive Classic Game Console and Atari Flashback product lines, as well as previous plug-and-play products including the Intellivision Flashback and Colecovision Flashback.

This year, AtGames is refreshing the Atari Flashback line by introducing two new products, both based on the Atari 2600. The Atari Flashback 7 is the latest entry in the established line of plug-and-play consoles. The machine mimics the look of the classic Seventies console in miniature, complete with wood effect front panel, and will feature 101 built-in games and two infrared wireless controllers. The unit also has two standard Atari controller ports, allowing for the use of original Atari 2600 peripherals including the paddle controller, as supported by games like *Warlords*.

However, the more exciting news is that the company will also be introducing a brand-new portable Atari console. The Atari Flashback Portable will include 60 built-in games and the ability to add more via an SD card slot, and features a 3.2 inch LCD screen and a rechargeable battery. The device greatly resembles AtGames' Sega Mega Drive Ultimate handheld, which features an identical body and six-button control layout. Both devices are set to retail for £49.99 and are due for release in November 2016.

THE COMPETITION

The Atari Flashback machines aren't the only plug-and-play retro consoles vying for your festive spend...



Nintendo Classic Mini: NES

The mini version of Nintendo's 8-bit hit has drawn a lot of attention, thanks to its line-up of games, including both Nintendo classics and third-party favourites. The machine also boasts HDMI and Wii-compatible controllers. It's due out on November 11th and will retail for £49.99.



Sega Mega Drive Wireless

This 16-bit revival boasts 39 built-in Mega Drive games and a cartridge slot allowing almost any original game to be played. However, the sound quality on past units has often been suspect. It'll be out in October for £49.99. A handheld console with an SD card slot is also available.



ZX Spectrum Vega

The plug-and-play version of Sinclair's classic computer is still available, with a whopping 1,000 built-in games and Micro-SD card support for more. The lack of a keyboard is a bugbear though, as many built-in games are text adventures. You can find it for £79.99 or less.



Retro-Bit Generations

This unit from the aftermarket hardware manufacturer will offer over 100 games from Capcom, Irem, Data East and Jaleco. It uses six-button controllers, HDMI and composite output, and an SD slot to save games. It's scheduled for an autumn release for a US retail price of $59.99.





» [Atari 2600] With support for two players, the Atari Flashback 7 allows for a nostalgic game of *Combat*.



» [Atari 2600] *Solaris* is a real graphical showcase for the Atari 2600 and remains impressive today.



» [Atari 2600] *Warlords* is built into the Atari Flashback 7, but you'll need paddle controllers to play it.

In order to find out more about what's new for this year's Atari range, we spoke to AtGames' Ray Attiyat:

Where did the concept for the original Flashback originate?
The concept for the original Flashback was to create an authentic experience, allowing users to go back in time and experience games as they were at the start. We wanted to make a console that would make people feel like our Atari games are as playable and enjoyable as the originals. AtGames wanted to provide this classic gaming experience to a whole new generation of gamers worldwide who wouldn't otherwise have experienced it.

How technically close is it to the original Atari 2600?
Our systems use completely new and modern technology compared to the Atari 2600. The gameplay experience, however, is nearly identical to the original. We strive to reproduce the authenticity at the hardware level as well. Examples include the controller ports on our console that are backward compatible with the original Atari 2600 controllers and paddles.

What does the Flashback 7 offer over previous versions?
Among minor hardware and software optimisations, our biggest new feature is the inclusion of a new port of arcade legend, *Frogger*.

> **"Our biggest new feature is the inclusion of a new port of arcade legend, Frogger"**
> Ray Attiyat

How do you go about choosing what games will appear on it?
We're always seeking partners to license amazing new content from. As a result, every year we can revisit our game line-up to keep things fresh.

What TV outputs are available?
Currently all of our products use standard composite output for the broadest range of compatibility.

Why is there no option to add additional games via a SD card?
We're always evaluating new features. In fact, our Atari Flashback Portable has an SD card slot for those gamers looking for that type of option.

Why do you think the Flashback devices remain so popular?
A lot of it is the timeless value of these games that entice a broad demographic and connect generations of players. These are the classics people played when they were younger and they now play with their children and grandchildren. Additionally, blogs, streams, and other social media outlets put a lot of focus on retro gaming, which helps introduce new players to these games and help former players reconnect. All of that and more helps keep our Flashback products consistently popular.

What games show off the system the best and why?
With dozens of classics to choose from, there's no one response! It all depends on what you're in the mood for. If it's a good action adventure, then *Adventure* is hard to beat. If it's a good shooter, you'll find nothing else quite like *Yars' Revenge*. *Combat* is a blast for two players. Then there's *Asteroids*, *Centipede*, and *Missile Command*, each of which needs no introduction. These and all of the other games on the Flashback play just like you remember them, so there's really no wrong answer here! *

THE GAMES

If you're thinking of picking up one of the Flashback consoles, you'll no doubt be keen to know what's on them

AVAILABLE ON BOTH CONSOLES

Adventure
Adventure II
Air Raiders
Aquaventure
Asteroids
Astroblast
Atari Climber
Black Jack
Bowling
Breakout
Centipede
Circus Atari
Crystal Castles
Dark Cavern
Demons To Diamonds
Double Dunk
Fatal Run
Frog Pond
Frogger
Frogs And Flies
Front Line
Fun With Numbers
Golf
Gravitar
Hangman
Haunted House
Human Cannonball
Millipede
Miniature Golf
Miss It!
Missile Command
Night Driver
Polaris
Pong (Video Olympics)
Radar Lock
Realsports Baseball
Realsports Basketball
Return To Haunted House
Saboteur
Save Mary
Secret Quest
Shield Shifter
Solaris
Space Attack
Star Ship
Star Strike
Stellar Track
Strip Off
Submarine Commander
Swordquest: Earthworld
Swordquest: Fireworld
Swordquest: Waterworld
Tempest
Video Checkers
Video Chess
Video Pinball
Wizard
Yars' Revenge
Yars' Return

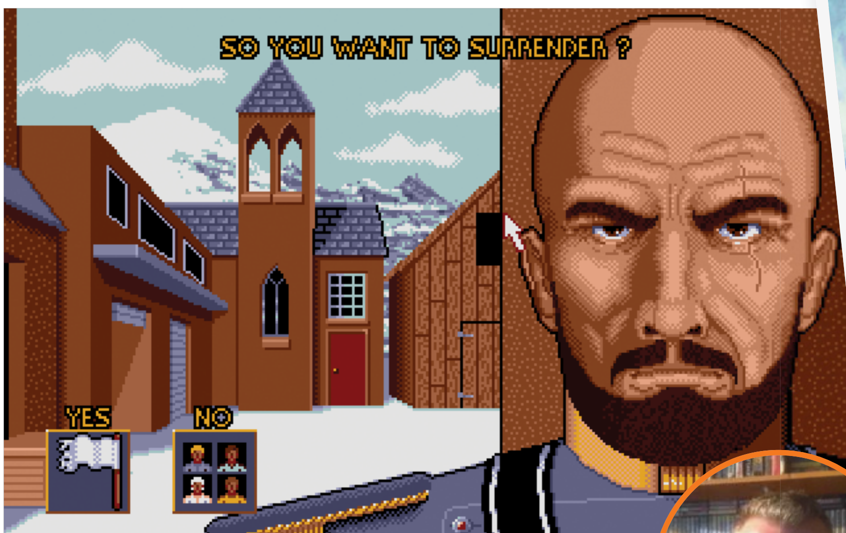
ONLY ON ATARI FLASHBACK 7

3D Tic-Tac-Toe
Air-Sea Battle
Armor Ambush
Backgammon
Basketball
Canyon Bomber
Championship Soccer
Chase It
Combat
Combat Two
Desert Falcon
Dodge 'Em
Escape It
Flag Capture
Football
Home Run
Indy 500
International Soccer
Jungle Hunt
Maze Craze
Motorodeo
Off The Wall
Outlaw
Realsports Baseball
Realsports Soccer
Realsports Volleyball
Sea Battle
Sky Diver
Slot Machine
Slot Racers
Space Invaders
Space War
Sprintmaster
Steeplechase
Street Racer
Super Baseball
Super Breakout
Super Challenge
Baseball
Super Challenge
Football
Super Football
Surround
Sword Fight
Warlords



WINTER IS COMING

DAN WHITEHEAD TELLS US ABOUT HIS NEW OFFICIAL MIDWINTER COMIC



» [Amiga] Dan's love for the original game has inspired him to create this new comic prequel.



Fans of the late Mike Singleton will be well aware of the excellent Midwinter, which made its debut in 1989 and used the power of 3D polygons to make a living, convincing world on the 16-bit systems of the time. It's a game writer Dan Whitehead is extremely familiar with, having experienced 3D worlds like *Driller* since the days of the Spectrum. "Midwinter was the first game to really deliver on that promise with any kind of speed or tangible gameplay beyond simply wandering about," he explains. "Even though it now seems visually crude, at the time it was absolutely intoxicating – my first experience of what we'd now call 'immersion', I suppose. I really felt like I was there. Then, on top of that, you had Mike Singleton's amazing knack for open-ended game design which, meant the world felt like it truly belonged to you, and you could do whatever you wanted there."

Dan's love of Midwinter has led to a new comic, which acts as a prequel to the main game. The kicker? This is an official product, and not a work of fan fiction. "Yes, it's an official part of the *Midwinter* universe," Dan proudly tells us. "Mike's family has kindly endorsed the project, and have been in the loop every step of the way, from script to finished pages. It was incredibly important to me that since Mike's passing in 2012 the original spirit of his work was honoured even as we added to it and evolved it."

Interestingly, the story itself is set before the events of *Midwinter* and focuses on the inhabitants of Midwinter Island. We were keen to ask Dan why it is set before the original game. "This was the big question for me," he admits, "what Midwinter story do you want to tell? For me, the beauty of the game is that the story that unfolds is unique to each player and based on what they do. I wrote an early draft that starred John Stark, the main character from the game, but the story just wasn't coming to life. I wanted to be playing that stuff, not reading it." Dan then considered adapting Mike's original story into a comic (Mike wrote a novella that was part of the instructions) but felt rewriting it wasn't the answer. The novella did give him inspiration, though. "I realised the key part of the game that isn't explored in that novella is the villain – General Masters. He's mentioned only right at the very end, I think maybe in the very last line, with the idea that John Stark is aware of this Masters character causing problems elsewhere on the island. I realised we could tell a prequel story that filled in some important blanks."

With a firm idea in place it was just a case of finding suitable comic book veterans to help bring the story to life. Dan found them in the forms of *Judge Dredd* artist, PJ Holden and cover artist Steve Pugh who has worked comics such as *Hellblazer, Preacher* and *Animal Man*. "As well as working in games and writing for over 20 years, I've also had an on-and-off parallel career in comics and licensed books," explains Dan. "When I decided I wanted to do *Midwinter* as a comic, I asked the writers and artists I knew for recommendations and PJ Holden was the name that kept coming up. Once I saw his style it just clicked. I worked with Steve [Pugh] on a book in 2007, and have loved the detail and dynamics of his work, so early in the process I asked him to come up with a image – a pretend movie poster – that could act as my inspiration for the project, and he more than delivered!"

Midwinter is available on iTunes for £4. ✱



» Steve Pugh's cover is superb. He's worked on comic classics, including *Preacher* and *Hellblazer*.



» Dan is no stranger to comics or videogames, having written about both mediums for the last 20 years.

Here's my bio… Paul Rose

Paul Rose is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator and chief writer of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes for kids TV, but can still be found rambling on about games, old and new, for his daily website, Digitiser2000.com.

Introducing… Mr Biffo

Do you remember something which nobody else seems to remember, to the point where you start to worry you made the whole thing up?

You know: like that time you and your family went on holiday with Rodney out of *Only Fools And Horses*, and you found a sheep's lung in an old barn, and he started crying? Yeah, well, newsflash: everyone who has told you over the years that it never actually happened was telling the truth (it was actually a bear's lung).

Well, I seem to remember a ZX Spectrum magazine which never existed: it was called '*16/48*'.

Yeah. "What!?" you're probably asking, based upon my experience.

"A magazine called *16/48* that I've never heard of? Sure you're not just making it up?"

16/48 came on a cassette tape. You must remember it? Every admittedly overpriced issue – I even remember that it was £2.99! – was loaded with reviews, and features, and crosswords or word searches, and actual proper games, and an instalment of a serialised graphic adventure, and… don't look at me with that expression.

Look, I'm not mad. It was real! It was revolutionary! C'mon. You must've heard of it. Please? Anyone? Nobody?

I would walk into WHSmith and John Menzies, and see it standing out among its rivals; the cardboard backing, and mounted tape, made it bigger than any other games mag on the racks.

And what was great is that there was no real way to know what each issue contained. There was no flicking through the contents; you just had to buy it, take it home, and load it up. It was like getting an unlabelled C90 from a dodgy mate, but without the guilt or risk of a knock on the door from FAST..

The Long Way Home, *16/48*'s multipart, time-travelling adventure, which ran across several issues, remains one of my favourite games to this day. I got help with it from my parents' neighbour Tony. Who, unfortunately, is now too senile and doddery to ask about it. But if I could I'd get him to recall the chapter set on the Marie Celeste, with the TARDIS, and well…

Look… here's how I know that *16/48* existed: it was the spark which lit the fire that led to me creating Digitiser, the teletext videogames magazine that I wrote for ten years from 1993. At the time, *16/48* felt like the future; a magazine about computer games that you could only read on your computer.

Creating a games mag on teletext – a medium that was, by the time I started working with it, already showing its age – was the next best thing to creating a games magazine on the Spectrum.

Even as I started my career as videogames journalist, I was being fuelled by nostalgia, by a wistful yearning for something that I had loved from years gone by. Which is why coming to **Retro Gamer** as a columnist feels like coming home. In some ways, writing about games has always been about the past for me… even if the past is a figment of my imagination. *



What do you think?

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

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the vault

THE COOL RETRO STUFF THAT WE'VE HAD OUR EYE ON THIS MONTH



PICK OF THE MONTH

Space Invaders Art Print

There are few characters in gaming as iconic and enduring as the invaders from Taito's monumental hit, *Space Invaders*. Even now, an invader sprite serves as immediate visual shorthand for 'videogames' – and that's why the invaders deserve to be on the wall of every games room, gaming cave and mini-arcade.

This art print shows off an image of the arcade game, complete with the colours that would have been simulated with screen overlays. Additionally, you can see the classic art that was displayed on Space Invaders cabinets right around the world.

If you're not a fan of the design we've shown here though, fear not as others are available. These include a stand-up cabinet diagram, an exploded view of a cocktail cabinet and a Japanese-style poster introducing the game to the world. Best of all, these prints all arrive framed straight away, so there's no need to head out and find one yourself.

Price: £19.99 **From:** funstockretro.co.uk

Gametee Candles

It's rare to find a game which stimulates your olfactory senses in the same way as your other senses, but that hasn't stopped Gametee from imagining the scents of some of your favourites. We've got the *Pokémon*-themed Poffin Bakery and *Zelda*-inspired Hyrulian Forest candles here, but there are over a dozen to choose from.

Price: £4.99 **From:** gametee.co.uk

Velocity 2X Soundtrack

Futurlab's fast, colourful shoot-'em-up side-scroller is one of the better indies we've played in recent memory and it's great to see a vinyl release of *Velocity 2X*'s pulsating soundtrack. Composed by Joris de Man (who is working on the upcoming *Horizon Zero Dawn*), the score comes on retro-style neon blue and pink LPs.

Price: £21 **From:** futurlab.co.uk

33 1/3: Koji Kondo's Super Mario Bros Soundtrack

This one's a change of pace for books on videogames, as author Andrew Schartmann concentrates entirely on the soundtrack to *Super Mario Bros.*. The small volume covers the classic 8-bit soundtrack in enormous depth, including music scores for *Mario* tracks and the pieces that inspired them. The academic tone of the book won't be to everyone's tastes, but musicians will love it.

Price: £6.99 **From:** bloomsbury.com

Golden Axe I & II Soundtrack

If your youth consisted of hacking and slashing your way to Death Adder's lair, you'll be delighted to see this new vinyl release which compiles the soundtracks of *Golden Axe* and *Golden Axe II* for the Mega Drive. You'll also find a pair of art prints showing off the front cover artwork for both beat-'em-ups.

Price: £19.99 **From:** data-discs.com

DISCUSS

What dormant series do you want to return?

Forum www.retrogamer.net/forum

■ *Gauntlet*. Done right. Why do all of these reboots have to mess it up so bad? Start with 1080p and stop there.
NorthWay

■ Definitely *Grim Fandango*. How could they abandon such a classic with an amazing premise and fantastic cast of characters without a revisit?
ncf1

■ *F-Zero*. It's been 13 years now, come on, Nintendo, I want another addition to the series!
Mayhem

■ *Darkstalkers*! Done in a proper 2D style and not with the el cheapo 3D or 2.5D that has invaded most modern fighting games. I won't even think about holding my breath, though…
Megamixer

■ *Jumping Flash*. These games were so much fun.
Gibberish Driftwood

■ I'd like to see a remade *Desert Strike*. Same mission structure, same viewpoint maybe with co-op?
RetroBob

Twitter twitter.com/@RetroGamer_mag

■ Can we have a *Bomberman* game? A real one? Online and local MP? New missions? Not too much to ask for.
@guyfawkesretro

■ *Goemon*! I'd like a new sprite-based 2D game, please. Three-player co-op and competitive option also.
@pablo_0151

■ *X-wing*. We've seen the success of *Elite Dangerous*. Imagine a VR-enabled *Star Wars* space sim! Stay on Target!
@hardistymark

■ *Sabreman*… give us 8-bit *Mire Mare* for starters, then I'll take *Sabre Wulf* in virtual reality!
@zx_spectrum_30

■ After a really successful return for *Ratchet And Clank* I'd love to see *Crash Bandicoot* or *Spyro*
@Al3xTheCoach

■ *Metroid*, while we are getting *Federation Force* I still feel that a proper 2D *Metroid* adventure is long overdue.
@Luke_Costin

Facebook facebook.com/RetroGamerUK

■ *Streets Of Rage 4* in classic 2D, not the 3D game they originally developed but never got finished.
Lee Langridge

■ *Exhumed* would be awesome! Especially with today's graphics.
Wyn James

■ *Medal Of Honor* back to WWI. *Brothers In Arms*, *Syphon Filter* or *Tenchu*.
Kurt Arne Strømmen

■ I'd like to see *Chuckie Egg 3*!
Ian Saynor

■ A new *Legacy Of Kain* would be nice.
Richard Turner

■ SSI's *The Summoning*, *Dark Sun*, *Spelljammer* or *Buck Rogers*.
Glen Henderson

■ A new and ambitious *Ridge Racer*. And a new *Chrono* game.
Martin Hinson

■ I would love to see a modern remake of the classic 8-bit trilogy '*The Last Ninja*'.
Adrian Fisher



What We Think

■ Publishers are sitting on a goldmine of unused properties right now, judging by your responses. My personal choice would be for CyberConnect2 to produce a sequel to the excellent PlayStation game *Silent Bomber*. Unfortunately, the company seems to be buried under a mountain of anime and manga licences…



COMMODORE PET

"I always loved the shape and design, but high eBay prices and getting one shipped to Northern Ireland from mainland UK was always going to prove difficult. So imagine my surprise to find one being given away locally!"

PAID: FREE

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

AMIGA A1200

■ "I had an A500 back in my teens – amazing computer, but from a modern perspective it's great to use this one with maxed out RAM, accelerator board and 4GB CF hard drive when I need a quick retro gaming fix."

PAID: £120

APPLE //C AND MONITOR

"Such a cute system, I brought this one home in my suitcases from the USA in 2015. The TSA opened the case to check what the monitor was but otherwise it all arrived intact."

PAID: £175

IBM MODEL M KEYBOARD

"Again a freebie. I have a six-pin to PS/2 adapter and then a PS/2 to USB adapter to allow me to use it as my daily keyboard on my office PC."

PAID: FREE

ATARI 2600

"A design classic. I love having it out on display. I had one as a child too so again, those memories!"

PAID: £60



Collector's corner

Readers take us through the retro keyhole

BIO

NAME: David McCauley

JOB: Self-employed computer consultant

ESTIMATED VALUE: £6,000

FAVOURITE SYSTEM: ZX Spectrum 128K

FAVOURITE GAME: *Turrican II*

Every collector we've featured in **Retro Gamer** typically has a tale about how their treasure trove of delights originally came to be, but unlike some, David McCauley's wasn't necessarily fuelled by a love of old games. "It was an impulse purchase of a rubber-keyed 48k on eBay about seven years ago to replace my original childhood one that had gotten lost in the mists of time," he tells us. "It all spiralled from there!"

And spiral it did, with David now having an impressive collection of different systems, typically various home computers from the golden age of gaming. Interestingly, unlike other collectors, David doesn't go after games. "[I focus on] interesting hardware from the era when it seemed that everyone was having a go at launching a personal computer," he tells us. "Since the collection takes up a lot of space I don't focus on physical games so much. I have flash-based adapters for the C64, Plus4, C16, Commodore PET, Apple II, Atari 8-bit, BBC, Mac Plus, Amiga and ZX Spectrum, which is an absolute godsend in this era of disintegrating floppy disks and tapes!"

Hardware takes up a lot of space, so we were interested to know how David's partner handled the home intrusion. "He rolls his eyes usually when he sees another parcel arriving but is very supportive," admits David. "Once the office got full of machines they spilled over into the upstairs living room and there's a Vectrex on permanent display in the kitchen – he hasn't complained once, come to think of it!"

Space issues aside, David is extremely happy with his collection of systems and is only too keen to pass his collecting knowledge over to anyone else keen to amass a similar collection. "Make sure people know you collect – you'll be surprised at the number of people who will approach you with something they've had gathering dust and 'want to see it go to a good home'. The Amstrad CPC 464 is on long-term loan from a friend, and a customer spotted someone offering a Commodore PET for free on Gumtree a few years back and put me onto it – it was going to the dump otherwise! I don't think the guy knew what he was giving away!" *

ZX SPECTRUM 48K (RUBBER KEY)

"It's the same as the original childhood Speccy that got me into computers back when I was seven, so playing on that brings back powerful memories."

PAID: £60





Gary Vincent

Paul Drury meets the president of the American Classic Arcade Museum at Funspot



» Funspot is recognised as the biggest arcade in the world by Guinness World Records. ACAM occupies the top floor.



» Funspot has been in business since the mid Eighties and is an important piece of American games history.



» Gary (second from left with sunglasses and moustache) with fellow students at Randy Fromm's Arcade School in 1984.

> **"We try to replicate that feeling of what it was like to be in an arcade back in the Eighties"**
> Gary Vincent

Congratulations on 35 years in the arcade business.
Thanks! I only thought it would be a temporary thing until I got into it and realised, 'This is rather fun!' There was always something new coming out so there was always something to be excited about, game-wise. You'd be waiting for the manufacturers to come out with some great new idea and you'd be the first to play it.

Can you remember your first day working at Funspot?
It was 20 August 1981. I remember coming to Funspot as a child and I spent most of the summer of 1981 up here, when I was 19. I got to know the Lawton family, which owns Funspot, and it asked me if I wanted to work for a few weeks because they were short-handed. I thought that sounded like fun. And basically, I never left. A three week summer job turned into a 35 year-stint in the coin-op business.

What was your motivation for setting up the American Classic Arcade Museum?
I've always been a history buff and have loved going to museums since I was a kid. In September of 1998 at the weekly staff meeting, I asked Bob Lawton if I could gather together all the classic games that were scattered across the building and put them on the top floor, like a museum. He said, 'Sure, sounds like a good idea!' That was the start of the American Classic Arcade Museum. Right now, we have 275 games out on the floor and another 140 in storage. We don't have a multi-million [dollar] budget to work with but I think we've done well with the funds we have and it's something I truly love.

Are there some arcade machines you are still trying to source for the museum?
We have a lot of what I call 'the staples' – *Pac-Man*, *Robotron*, *Defender*, *Donkey Kong*, all the titles everyone remembers. What I have been trying to do lately is find obscure titles from companies that weren't around for long. I've also been working on collecting some early Atari machines. About a year ago I picked up a *Gotcha*, which is pretty obscure. It has some damage on the control panel…

Isn't that the machine with 'breasts' as controllers?
Ours is the one with joysticks, not the breast version! It looks like someone didn't have a good game, though, and smashed the joystick right through the cabinet.

So you restore old machines, too?
Oh yes. There are days you throw your hands up in the air thinking 'why am I doing this?' Then I'll see a game we have and I say, 'Let's pull it out and do a restoration job on that and get it out on the floor again for people to enjoy.' That brings me back around. I'm especially proud of *Death Race*. We got it off Ebay for $1,500 and it was a total rebuild, it was in such bad condition. I've never seen another yellow *Death Race*. It's unique.



» Gary collecting an original *Pong* cabinet with ACAM volunteer and *Carnival* world champion, Fred Pastore.

Does the arcade still feel special to you after all these years?
It does. When I walk through ACAM, I'll hear a sound from one of the machines and instantly I'm reminded of some fun time back in the Eighties, when all these games were brand new and I had a full head of hair. That's what we try to do – replicate that feeling of what it was like to be in an arcade back then. *

For more on ACAM and its home, Funspot, visit classicarcademuseum.org.

BACK TO THE NINETIES



[N64] Shoot at the giant insects in this new third-person shooter from Rare.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 1999

NOVEMBER 1999 – EA receives a Medal Of Honour, 007 returns, Square triggers a Chrono sequel, Pokémon goes for Silver and Gold, Spyro is back, Beasts are busted in Dark Arms and Unreal Tournament shoots and scores. Richard Burton tools up…



DreamWorks and Electronic Arts introduced us to *Medal Of Honor*, a first-person shooter set during the final months of World War II and featuring the irrepressible Lieutenant James Patterson in what would become a long, varied and much loved series.

Playing as Jimmy, your task was to complete an objective before progressing to the next level. There's a wealth of weaponry and objects to help you during your missions including a rifle, sniper rifle, grenades and a smattering of ammo and medical packs.

The musical score added a cinematic quality, while gameplay intensity was nerve-shreddingly good. Maybe that silver screen feel shone through as the storyline was created by film director Steven Spielberg.

We jump from the first person to the third with the release of 007: *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Released on the PlayStation by Electronic Arts, this was invariably going to be compared to Rare's all-conquering *GoldenEye*.

To be fair, not many shooters would stand up to the brilliance of that game, and while *Tomorrow Never Dies* had its problems, most notable of which was the slightly stodgy controls, the sheer variety of weapons and gadgets available encouraged you to delve deeper and find, underneath the martini-soaked sheen and the glossy all-embracing advertising campaign, a rather fun ten levels of action/adventure shooter in which you also got to ski, drive and swim.

Role-playing gamers welcomed the release, in Japan at least, of *Chrono Cross* for PlayStation, the sequel to the excellent *Chrono Trigger*. You play Serge, a lad with a habit of slipping between parallel worlds. You must get him back to his world while attempting to unravel how he can shift between dimensions and why it happens. Serge must complete tasks in different dimensions to progress, with some tasks having an impact on the events in its parallel world.

Combat elements are turned-based with enemies helpfully mapped to avoid ambush scenarios. While the majority of the game is linear, there are several game endings. There are also a variety of smaller in-game quests which offer a welcome diversion to the bigger picture.

Developed by Squaresoft, *Chrono Cross* was a lovely RPG. The complexity of the gameplay underpinned an already engaging storyline resulting in a fantastical game.

The most eagerly-awaited release of the month, with Japan again getting first dibs, was *Pokémon Gold & Silver* for the Game Boy Color. The follow-up to the original *Red & Blue* featured 100 all-new Pokémon and would once again see you capture, train, battle and trade Pokémon to try and complete your 251 character Pokédex. Trading between *Silver* and *Gold* versions and the backwards compatibility element with *Red & Blue* were essential to completing your collection.

New features to *Gold & Silver* were the ability of Pokémon to hold an item. Some would help in battle, some, such as a healing berries, would aid recovery.

Pokémon *Gold & Silver* sold a whopping six million units in six months in Japan. Later, as with *Red & Blue* receiving a *Yellow* special edition, *Gold*



[PlayStation] Bond is back and *Tomorrow Never Dies* was a sterling effort given its golden-eyed predecessor.



[PlayStation] Square's *Chrono Cross* was a wonderful RPG. What a shame that it was never released in Europe.

THIS MONTH IN…

COMPUTER & VIDEOGAMES

The mag touted what it said were the first pictures of the Sony PS2 in an exclusive preview. It featured lovely shots of the console and *C&VG* waxed lyrically about its specifications and games, highlighting *The Bouncer, Eternal Ring* and *Sky Surfer* as titles to watch. Try again, *C&VG*.



AMIGA FORMAT

The Amiga scene had been in turmoil for years. Now news had filtered through that current trademark holders, Amiga Inc., had sacked key member Bill McEwen with president Jim Collas also resigning. Adding to their wintery woes, Iwin Corporation announced it was producing a range of computers running the classic AmigaOS.



PC ACCELERATOR

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation was ready for release and *PC Accelerator* celebrated with a Lara Croft overload. A new Lara model graced the cover, Lara Weller replacing Nell McAndrew, followed by a cheeky yet acerbic preview comparing the new release to *Tomb Raider 3*, referring to it as *The Last Repetition*.



& Silver later received an update with the *Crystal* edition.

November saw the return of *Spyro The Dragon*, in *Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage* on PlayStation. The adventure platformer saw Spyro attempting to go on holiday using a portal and instead landing himself in Avalar, having been summoned to fight Ripto, a dinosaur intent on taking over the realm.

Spyro 2 was split into three worlds, each was burgeoning with all manner of subplots, mini-quests and secret shenanigans. Gameplay consisted of collecting gems and beating bosses while exploring the vast levels and solving puzzles. It was good fun, simple to pick up and play but with just enough complexity to keep you absorbed.

Dark Arms: Beast Buster for the Neo-Geo Pocket Color was the follow-up title to the arcade rail shooter *Beast Busters,* originally released on the Amiga and Atari ST by SNK. *Dark Arms* followed a different path being an action role-playing adventure featuring evolving guns. Your weapon utilises captured spirits, evolving it into something packing more of a punch.

Dark Arms also required puzzle-solving but the main task was to contain and eliminate a series of demon and spirit infestations. It was a solid title but it never quite got the juices flowing.

If you love big weapons, no storyline and amazing multiplayer action then the PC release of *Unreal Tournament* by GT Interactive would have you positively throbbing. The exemplary FPS was loaded with amazing features such as multiple game modes including Capture The Flag and Deathmatch.

Add some truly superb level design, AI bots that were ingeniously intelligent, and an assortment of downright malevolent weaponry and you had yourself one hell of a fragfest.

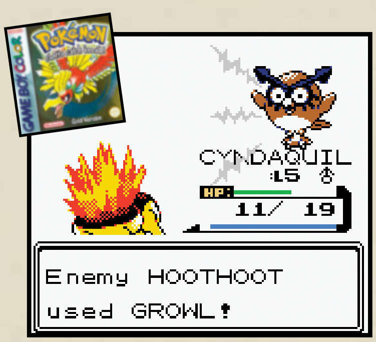
More shooting action arrived with *Jet Force Gemini* developed by Rare for the Nintendo 64. The third-person shooter saw you and your team battling Mizar, a rather large insect leader, complete with an insect army, across 15 huge interconnected open worlds.

You had to save survivors, known as Tribals, from the clutches of the insectoid army. There's also a Deathmatch mode where you can shoot your friends.

Jet Force Gemini would prove popular on the N64 despite criticisms squared at the multiplayer modes being on the sluggish side. Outstanding audio tempered this somewhat, as did splattering a giant insect army with massive guns. *



[PlayStation] With development by DreamWorks, and the story created by Steven Spielberg, *Medal Of Honor* was a cinematic hit.



[Game Boy Color] A new batch of Pokémon appear alongside old favourites in *Gold & Silver*.

CHARTS

NOVEMBER 1999

NINTENDO 64



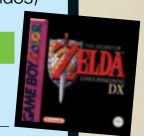
1. Star Wars: Rogue Squadron (Nintendo)
2. Ocarina Of Time (Nintendo)
3. Star Wars: Episode I Racer (Nintendo)
4. Quake II (Activision)
5. F-1 Grand Prix II (Video System)

PLAYSTATION



1. Metal Gear Solid (Konami)
2. Civilization 2 (Activision)
3. Rugrats: Studio Tour (THQ)
4. FIFA 99 (Electronic Arts)
5. Championship Manager (Eidos)

GAME BOY COLOUR



1. The Legend Of Zelda DX (Nintendo)
2. The Rugrats Movie (THQ)
3. Wario Land 2 (Nintendo)
4. FIFA 2000 (Electronic Arts)
5. WWF Attitude (Acclaim)

MUSIC



1. Lift Me Up (Geri Halliwell)
2. She's The One/It's Only Us (Robbie Williams)
3. King Of My Castle (Wamdue Project)
4. The Millennium Prayer (Cliff Richard)
5. If I Could Turn Back The Hands Of Time (R Kelly)

NEWS NOVEMBER 1999

6 November saw a referendum in Australia to decide whether it would like to change the constitution and establish the Commonwealth Of Australia as a republic, replacing the Queen and Governor General with an appointed President. The turnout was hugely impressive with 95 per cent of the electorate voting. The final result was a 55 per cent majority in favour of keeping the Queen as Australia's 'formal' Head Of State.

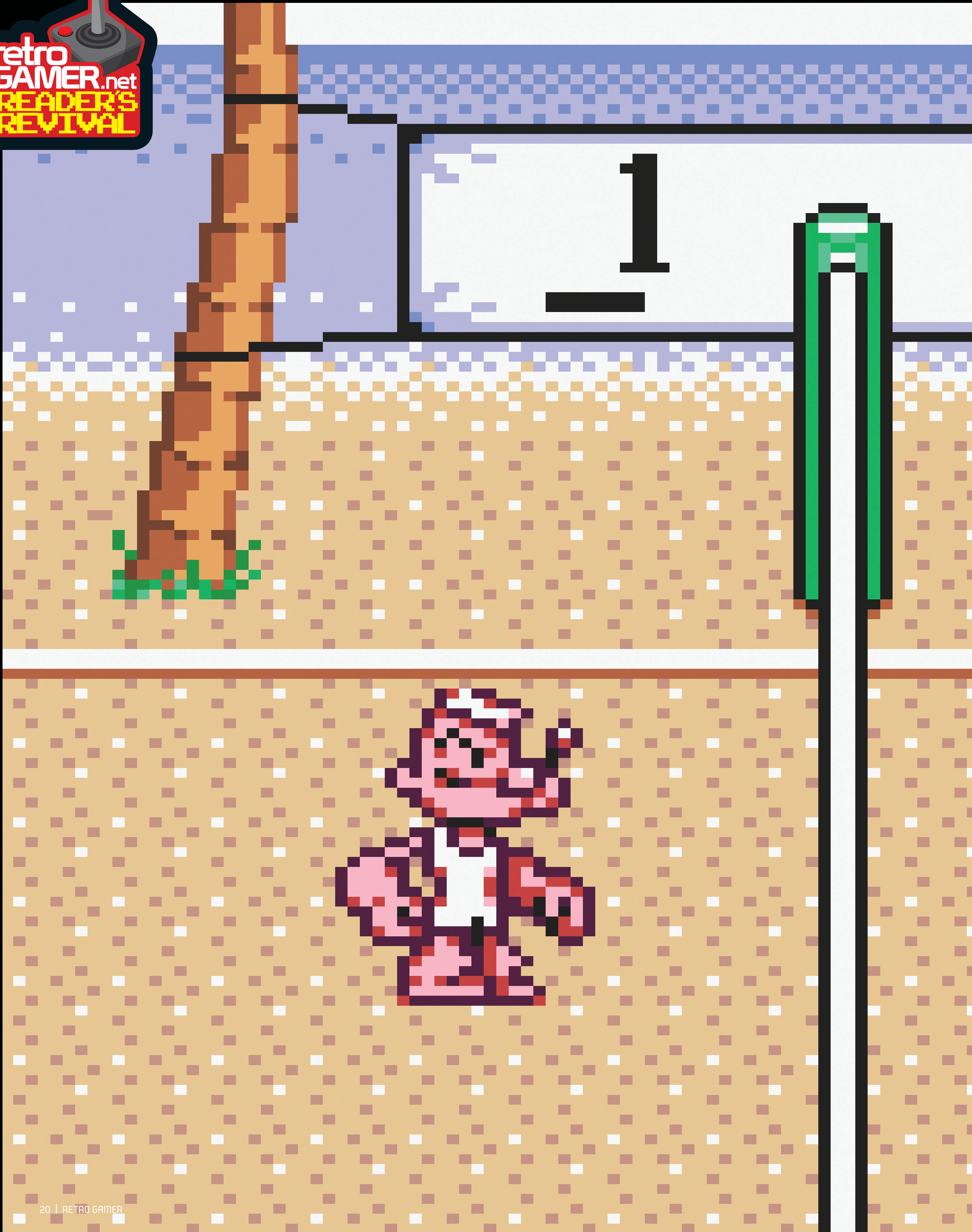
November proved to be a great month for new films with something for everyone across a wide range of genres. Just some of the new releases this month were, *Dogma*, *Pokémon: The First Movie*, *The World Is Not Enough*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Flawless* and *End Of Days*.

New music albums were also out in force with a bumper crop this month, including *The Battle Of Los Angeles* (Rage Against The Machine), *Northern Star* (Melanie C), *The Desert Life* (Counting Crows), *There Is Nothing Left To Lose* (Foo Fighters), *Greatest Hits III* (Queen), *Rave Un2 The Joy Fantastic* (Prince), *Reload* (Tom Jones) and *Affirmation* (Savage Garden).

The end of November saw the retirement of iconic 'Test Card F' featuring Carole Hersee and Bubbles The Clown playing Noughts And Crosses after 34 years of service. Test Card F was transmitted when television stations closed down for the night to test engineering aspects of the television picture. It was estimated that Test Card F was broadcast for 70,000 hours or almost eight years continuously. It was replaced with widescreen and digital variant test cards.



retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL





Popeye's Beach Volleyball

"GENTLEMEN, YOU KNOW THE RULES – THERE ARE NO RULES"

#105

» TECHNOS » GAME GEAR » 1994

Despite Popeye being an American creation this sport sim was only released in Japan. At least Popeye playing volleyball makes sense, unlike some other games that put licensed characters into bizarre genres. *Droopy's Tennis Open* on the Game Boy Advance is just one fine example. Droopy the dog was hardly a character known for having quick reactions, was he?

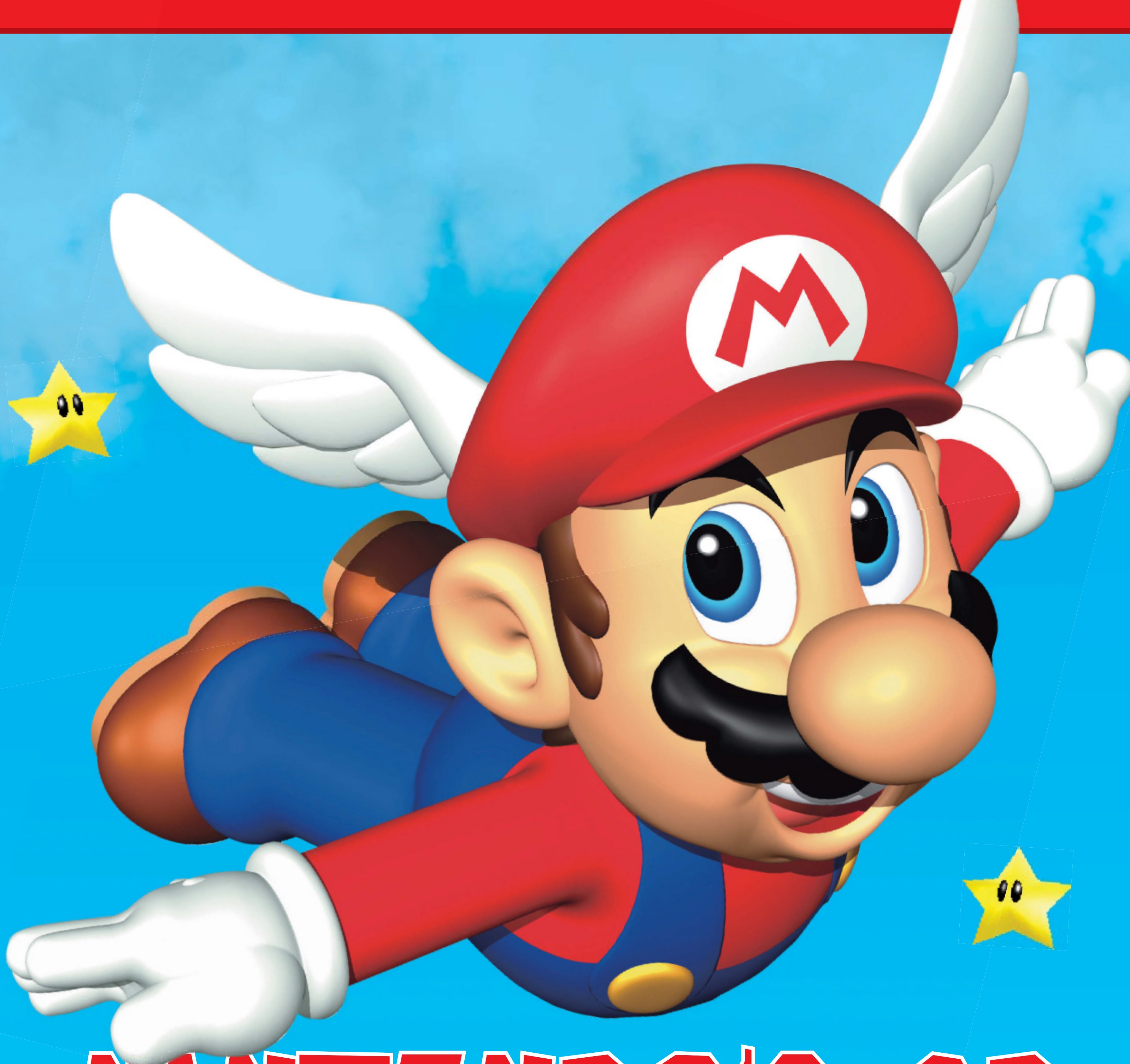
Developers Technos – of *Double Dragon* fame – had made a few volleyball games previously to this one and as such its experience with the sport shows clearly. It is, however, a little tricky at first – if you stand in the wrong place, even by just a few pixels, the ball will hit the floor and your opponents (Brutus, and sometimes the Sea Hag) get a point.

Technos clearly had both love and respect for the licence – it looks really nice and colourful, with well-drawn sprites and some great comical touches. Brutus sometimes bounces the ball off his belly while Wimpy takes his hat off and knocks it off the top of his head. Spinach is available as a power-up and, yes, that famous theme tune plays in the background while powered-up.

Also included are some incredibly simple minigames including a slot machine, a fishing contest and weight lifting. Due to their swift nature – there are no tutorials or rewards – the term 'micro-games' is perhaps more apt.

Even with a steep learning curve there's a nice feel good vibe to everything. That's providing you can get over the sight of the Popeye cast in their bathing suits… *

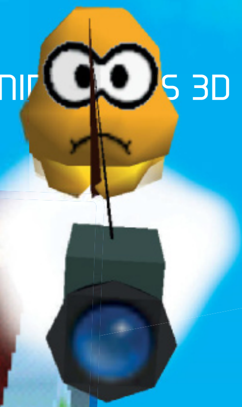
MATT



NINTENDO'S 3D GAME-CHANGER

In an age when it was said that 3D platform games didn't work, Nintendo proved us all wrong. Nick Thorpe and Luke Albigés examine the impact of the N64's most revolutionary game...









Nintendo has always been a company that has set its own agenda, and that has rarely been more apparent than it was with the N64. Rather than following the likes of 3DO, Sega and Sony into the CD-ROM market, it stuck doggedly to cartridges. Instead of simply evolving the SNES pad, it produced a radical three-pronged controller design. Neither of those design choices proved to be the future – it's a tall order to convince an entire industry to do things differently, after all. The thing that made people take note was *Super Mario 64*, though – a bold and unique design, just like the machine it ran on. However, unlike its host hardware, it made a profound impact on the rest of the industry, shaping the development of future platform games and 3D games in general for years to come.

Of course, *Super Mario 64* had to be a bold design. The one common feature of 3D platform games released before *Super Mario 64* is that they were all distinct creations, as no two developers had the same vision of how to adapt the genre to the polygonal revolution. Exact gave us *Jumping Flash!*, a game which offered free-roaming stages, viewed from a first-person perspective. Realtime Associates delivered *Bug!*, which featured 3D stages comprised of interlocking straight paths, thus strictly regulating player movement. Xing's *Floating Runner* utilised free-roaming stages but employed a fixed perspective that made it feel almost like a top-down 2D game. Even if Nintendo had wanted to follow convention with Mario's 3D debut, there was simply no convention to follow.

The other reason that it had to be a groundbreaking game was the weight of expectation placed upon it at the time. "Up until *Mario 64*, and probably until *Mario Galaxy*, there has always been expectation surrounding a new Nintendo console and with it a new *Mario*," says Paul Davies, who was the editor of *Computer & Video Games* during the development and release of *Super Mario 64*. "So, even though we had no idea how this would shape up, the prospect of *Ultra 64 Mario* was enough to affect your breathing for a while."

Even those close to Nintendo weren't aware of what was in the works. "I was working for Software Creations at the time and they were part of the original 'Dream Team' of developers working on N64," recalls John Pickford. "I was lucky enough to be part of a group to visit the Shoshinkai 1995 show in Tokyo for the first unveiling of the Ultra 64 and its software. When we landed at the airport I remember bumping into several other British developers including the Stampers from Rare and David Jones from DMA design. David said something along the lines of, 'I hear *Mario* is looking very good.' That was the first time I had heard there was a *Mario* game in development. There had been zero publicity or even mention of *Mario* until that point."



» [N64] Later levels typically featured more floating islands, and consequently greater risk of death by plummeting.



» John Pickford was one of the early 'Dream Team' developers for the N64 and had an early glimpse of *Mario 64*.

DOFFING THE CAP

A Hat In Time director Jonas Kaerlev on how Super Mario 64 inspired and influenced his crowdfunded 3D platformer



When did you first encounter *Super Mario 64*, and what impression did you get from it?
I experienced *Super Mario 64* for the first time in the late Nineties. It was the first game I played that was fully 3D, so it was really impressive at the time.

I wasn't great at English back then, since I'm not a native English speaker, so a lot of the dialogue got lost on me, but that didn't stop me from getting all 120 Stars. The presentation made it easy to fill in the gaps and imagine what the characters were saying. If I didn't know what to do because the dialogue was the only guide, I'd just explore the level until I found out what was going on – this sparked my interest in games that provide an interesting world to explore.

What were your favourite parts of *Super Mario 64*?
There are so many good parts! I think everyone remembers the piano in Big Boo's Haunt, the vertical climb up Whomp's Fortress, and plotting vengeance against the bird who took your hat in Shifting Sand Land. Peach's Castle is also one of the best parts of *Super Mario 64* – it feels so mysterious, almost like a full level in and of itself.

Which 3D platform games do you think were the best successors to *Super Mario 64*?
Super Mario Sunshine is definitely one of the best, and it's a *literal* successor to *Super Mario 64*. It stays true to the formula that *Mario 64* created, but adds more flavour to the world, making it all seem like a real, connected place. I like how the levels transform over time. It's so cool to watch Delfino Plaza get flooded with water when Corona Mountain erupts.

Psychonauts by DoubleFine is also a really great spiritual successor! It's a bit more story-based, and the levels are amazing, especially Whispering Rock and The Milkman Conspiracy. *Psychonauts* even did *Super Mario Galaxy* gravity before that was a thing!

Which elements of *Super Mario 64* have you drawn inspiration from for A Hat In Time?
Similar to *Super Mario 64*, every mission in *A Hat In Time* is centred on a Time Piece the player has to collect. A lot of the levels undergo massive changes for every new mission, to make the level feel fresh on every visit.

At first, you might be defeating the Mafia Of Cooks to collect your Time Piece, and next you're a detective in the mission 'Murder On The Owl Express'. Every new mission has a story, and you'll get to understand more about the levels and characters on every visit.

As a developer of 3D platform games, how do you seek to differentiate *A Hat In Time* from genre-defining games like *Super Mario 64*?
A Hat In Time takes a different approach to both gameplay and story. For gameplay, the player's moveset is completely different, using a double-jump and an air boost to navigate both horizontal and vertical space. The player can also change and upgrade the moveset by collecting badges and putting them on their hat. This way, we reward players for exploring with features that enrich their experience. For story, every level in *A Hat In Time* is called a Chapter. Every Chapter focuses on a single location, be it Mafia Town, Subcon Forest, or the Owl Express train. Additionally, every Chapter introduces a new cast of characters, and these characters stick with you for the entire Chapter, until you reach the Chapter finale, where things go off the rails! In Subcon Forest, you'll be signing your soul away in contracts to The Snatcher, and on the Owl Express, you'll have to choose whether the angry Conductor or the smooth DJ Grooves is your friend, or your foe.

A Hat in Time also supports multiplayer, both local and online. We took inspiration from a *Mario 64* hack, and saw a lot of potential to fully realise multiplayer for *A Hat in Time*. You can defeat bosses, collect Time Pieces and have a good time your friends.

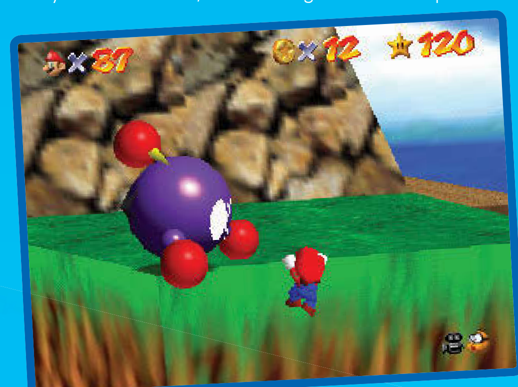
Lastly, *A Hat in Time* has modding support. Players can create their own worlds and missions. We've seen the amazing things people can make in their favourite games, so we want to embrace that fully. The levels can be either simple to design or they can be giant worlds with multiple missions. All these features feel like a natural evolution of *Mario 64*, and we hope everyone will be enjoying *A Hat in Time* when it comes to Windows and Mac in 2017.

Placards at Shoshinkai said that the game was 50 per cent complete, and even described *Super Mario 64* as a temporary title, but that wasn't the impression that attendees took away from the event. On a visual level alone, Nintendo had already produced something stunning. "The game was shown on the show floor – looking finished and playable," says John. "And like nothing else I'd ever seen." Paul was also attending the show, and the game made a similar impression on him. "It sounds incredibly corny, but I couldn't believe my eyes. I was gobsmacked, bowled over."

That initial showing elicited strong emotional reactions from all who saw it. "I was so excited, I tried to impress the hotel staff with my bagful of press materials and transparencies," Paul confesses. "They were not impressed." According to John, other people were feeling something closer to fear, or at the least denial. "I don't know if it's true but I heard a rumour that 'Sony execs' were going around telling people that the game was running on hidden 'workstations'," he recalls. "Hard to believe now but a lot of the technical elements (MIP mapping, filtering, perspective-correct textures, z-buffering, hardware anti-aliasing) were all new to consoles and not present on PlayStation."

The version of *Super Mario 64* shown at Shoshinkai in November 1995 might not look immediately recognisable to fans – even the familiar entrance hall of the castle is different, lacking the cloud murals and even the central staircase seen in the final game – but that incredible visual polish carried over to the finished game because there was no fabrication or trickery involved. The N64 was perfectly capable of all of those features, and gave *Super Mario 64*'s worlds and characters a feeling of solidity that immediately placed both the game and console ahead of the competition.

"Everything just worked so incredibly slickly," says Andrew Oliver, then running *Glover* developer



» [N64] For the first time ever, Mario could dangle from ledges and pull himself up after a close jump.

» Chris Sutherland was responsible for *Banjo-Kazooie* and is now working on *Yooka-Laylee*.







» [N64] Unlike the main stages, boss stages were typically linear affairs with little freedom to explore.

"This set the benchmark – anyone releasing a 3D platformer thereafter on N64 was going to be compared with Mario by players!"

Chris Sutherland



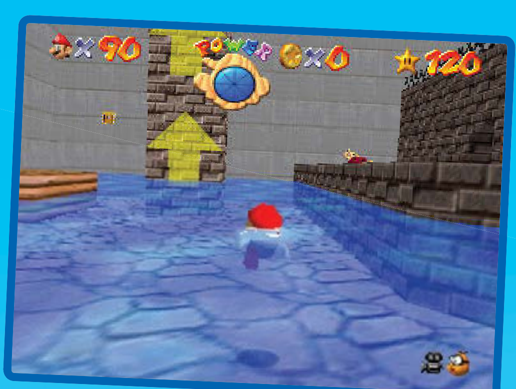
Interactive Studios. "In the 'other camp', we'd been amazed by PlayStation's 3D capabilities. But, whilst Sony pushed all developers to make 3D games, many of us struggled with certain aspects. Cameras were shaky, 3D meshes showed cracks, textures warped and getting a third-person character to feel really nice and for the camera to track it well always seemed just out of reach." Nintendo's game exhibited none of those problems. "*Mario 64* was so professional, no shake, no shudder, or warping or cracking textures. The PlayStation was 32-bit with integer maths and the N64 was 64-bit with floating point maths, so there was good reason it worked so much better."

Mark R Jones, a former artist for Ocean, was similarly taken aback by the leap in 3D quality. "The graphics were jaw-dropping. I'd only really played a few 3D games on the PlayStation and this was a massive improvement," he remembers. "Round things looked round and not like a series of joined up straight lines. The colours were bright and vibrant and, despite many games claiming that playing them was 'like controlling a cartoon', I think that with this game it had really and finally happened for real. I remember everyone at school saying that *Knight Lore* on the Spectrum was like a cartoon back in 1984. But really it wasn't. *Mario* was the real thing. It had actually happened."

The press immediately set the hype train in motion. New images would appear in magazines every month, whipping anticipation up to fever pitch – but it wasn't just the public that was excited. Even developers couldn't wait to get their hands on the game. "Being a fan of the 2D *Mario* series I was fascinated by how they'd brought *Mario* into 3D, what problems they'd encountered and the approaches they took to tackling them," says Chris Sutherland of Playtonic Games. At Rare, then a Nintendo subsidiary, he served as the lead programmer on *Banjo-Kazooie*. "One might have expected the transition to 3D to have been gradual, e.g. Nintendo could have taken a traditional 2D *Mario* course and given it hints of 3D (similar to the *Donkey Kong Country Returns*) but instead they jumped in head first to give the player an immersive world to explore," he continues. "This set the benchmark – anyone releasing a 3D platformer thereafter on N64 was going to be compared with *Mario* by players!"



» [N64] These rolling balls rolled realistically around banked curves, producing lateral movement that could trip unwary players up.



» [N64] Level design was supremely clever – Wet-Dry World required manipulation of water levels to achieve your goals.

Word got around the *Killer Instinct* barn that the new *Mario* game was in the building so we all piled into Chris Tilston's room for a gander," recalls Chris Seavor, another former Rare developer who led the development of *Conker's Bad Fur Day*. "I think this was a little bit before it actually released and it was the Japanese version, so nobody could understand any of the text. Needless to say it was pretty mind-blowing. I'd never seen anything like it before. Then Tim [Stamper] turned up looking rather mortified that we were all seeing this 'super secret' thing and took it away… Still, I'll never forget that moment."

Andrew's first experience with the game was equally memorable. "It was the summer of 1996 at the relatively-new E3 show in Los Angeles – Nintendo had a huge stand with around 30 N64s set up and dedicated to *Mario 64* and people queuing three deep to take turns. Most were running around outside the castle – just enjoying the experience of running Mario around a beautiful cartoon fantasy world. They nailed the feel good controls of a character running around a 3D world. Everyone was beaming – it was a turning point for the industry."

The importance of solid controls to *Super Mario 64* can't be overstated. "It was the first time I had played a game where messing around with the character's abilities was a lot of fun even with nothing specific ▶



DIFFERENT STROKES

Mario's 3D debut was so good it launched the DS, too. But the DS version was no lazy port – it was a remake with new features…



MORE CHARACTERS

■ In addition to Mario, three extra characters – Yoshi, Wario and Luigi – were made playable, each with slight differences. Luigi's jumps are higher at the cost of handling, for instance, while Yoshi gets a unique hybrid of his *Yoshi's Island* move set and the original *Super Mario 64* one. Collecting caps mid-level lets you switch between them.

NEW ABILITIES

■ Classic *Mario 64* power-ups like the Wing Cap, Vanish Cap and Metal Cap are split among each of the characters, while new powers include mushrooms that can boost character size and damage (like the Mega Mushrooms seen later in the series) and a fire breath move for Yoshi. Several Power Stars are tied to the character-specific abilities.

EXTRA STARS

■ There are 37 additional Power Stars in the DS version, although several original ones were altered or removed for a grand total of 150. Many of the new ones are Switch Stars (which triggered by a switch and must be collected before they vanish). Collecting every Star still allows access to the castle roof via the cannon in the grounds, although Yoshi is no longer there as he's now playable.



» Rare's Gregg Mayles was the designer for both *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Banjo-Tooie*.

MULTIPLAYER & MINIGAMES

■ VS Mode lets up to four players face off in arenas in an attempt to grab as many Stars and Coins as possible within a time limit. There are also unlockable minigames, which can be earned by catching rabbits in the main game. These are largely simple distractions, all of which are designed to showcase various uses for the handheld's touchscreen.

CONTROL OPTIONS

■ Given that the DS didn't have an analogue stick, Nintendo had to get creative with its input methods here. One option is to use digital control with an extra run button, although this lacks precision. The other uses the touchscreen as a virtual analogue stick and, while tricky to get used to, this is the best of the two options once you manage to adjust to it.



IMPROVED GRAPHICS

■ A combination of decent processing power and a smaller screen means that many aspects of the graphics see a marked improvement on DS – Bowser's model in particular is more in line with his modern look, while there are plenty of notable changes (most for the better) over the course of the game. The second screen is also used to display an overhead course map.







» [N64] Jumping over waves of ice is just one of the challenges in Snow Man's Land.



to do," says Gregg Mayles, a Rare developer and *Banjo-Kazooie*'s designer. "It has still not been beaten, in my honest opinion," Chris Seavor adds. "Slick, tight, great animation and totally intuitive. The first attempt at such a control type and they nailed it for the ages." In fact, he found that even the difficult aspects of controlling the portly plumber provided satisfaction. "There was a particular mechanic that took me ages to get to grips with, which involved jumping off a wall, I just couldn't do it. Then one day all my muscles suddenly twigged, and the sheer joy of jumping up and up from wall to wall, in 3D, was a revelation."

Paul's first impression of the game centred on "using the central, solitary analogue stick to help Mario perform backflips and dodge and weave around the first level of the game", and it was the analogue stick that did a lot of the work in making the game feel so good. John explains the appeal well: "The self-centring thumb stick was the first viable analogue joystick I'd come across. Analogue sticks have been around forever but they were always near-enough impossible to use. *Mario* had effortless, expressive, intuitive control of a character in a 3D world," he says. "Back then, it was more or less accepted that 3D platformers don't work. There had been a few noble attempts but they were all difficult and confusing to play. Usually the gameplay was about overcoming the controls and camera restriction," he continues. "*Mario 64* had you running, skipping, backflipping, climbing trees and even flying. Nintendo had done the impossible."

Of course, all of that excellent control would have been for nought if the game didn't provide adequate space to utilise it, and challenges to overcome. Nintendo delivered in both regards. Paul remembers the sense of disbelief in the office at the time. "The art designer of *C&VG* was asking me all these questions, because he doubted that much of what he had heard was true: 'Can I just run onto that bridge and jump into the water? And then I can swim? Under the water?'" For Gregg, the structure was as important as the space. "3D games up to this point felt restricted in where you could go and what you could do, but *Mario 64* removed these restrictions," he explains. "The freedom made the worlds a joy to explore, coupled with an progression system which allowed you to tackle challenges in the order you wanted to."







MARIO'S MARVELLOUS MOVES

A closer look at the portly plumber's amazingly agile abilities





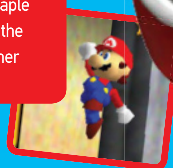
MOVEMENT (Analogue Stick)

■ Full control over Mario's movement speed is an integral aspect of the game, allowing for a degree of freedom and precision that digital control simply can't offer in 3D space.



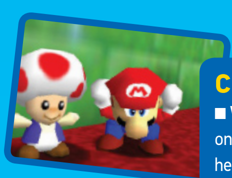
PUNCH B

■ A new addition to Mario's arsenal, this allows for more ways of interacting with the world, whether that be hitting blocks and switches or smacking enemies instead of jumping on them.



JUMP A

■ Perfect for when you don't want to be on the ground any more, Mario's staple move is as versatile as ever here – the longer you hold the button, the higher Mario will jump.



CROUCH Z

■ Where once you would just press down on the D-pad to make Mario crouch, here a bespoke button is needed. Rarely required on its own, but frequently incorporated into advanced techniques.

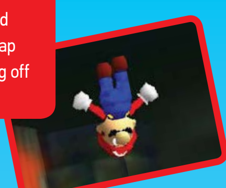
DOUBLE JUMP A, A

■ Time a second jump for immediately after you land from the first and you'll launch Mario slightly higher, with an audio cue to let you know you've performed this successfully.



KICK B (While jumping)

■ There's more to this move than it seems – it maintains Mario's momentum from whatever he's doing, making it a key ingredient of any speedrun rather than an offensive move.



TRIPLE JUMP A, A, A

■ A third timed leap is also possible, this time giving a much more obvious and useful height boost. With the Wing Cap on, this move will send Mario soaring off into the sky.



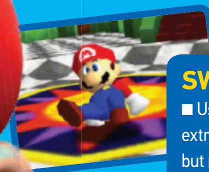
DIVE B (While moving)

■ Casual players might not like this move on account of how often it comes out instead of the punch while moving, but experts swear by it for grabbing objects without losing too much momentum.



BACKFLIP Z + A

■ Similar to the direction-changing somersault, only performed from a static crouch. Given Mario's general mobility, the somersault is generally considered to be more useful.



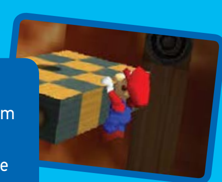
SWEEP KICK Z + B

■ Useful for making Mario perform extremely brief breakdancing displays, but not a lot more, sadly. Still, variety is never a bad thing, so bust a move from time to time!



LONG JUMP Z + A (While running)

■ Timing is key to mastering this long-range leap – press and hold Z while running to crouch-slide and quickly press A to send Mario flying. Bold use of this can skip many obstacles and hazards.



CLING (Land near platform edge or slowly walk off ledge)

■ Mario no longer has to fear death from slightly misjudging distance. Fall just short of a ledge and you'll grab the edge and can pull yourself up, sacrificing speed for safety.



SOMERSAULT (Analogue stick away from direction of running) + A

■ Jerk the stick away from the direction of travel and jump to perform a flip that goes much higher than a regular jump – great for quickly getting a vertical boost.



SLIDE KICK Z + B (While running)

■ Performed in the same manner as the long jump, only with B instead of A. This will earn you extra style points, but it's far from an essential part of Mario's repertoire.



WALL JUMP (Jump at wall, analogue stick away) + A

■ After launching himself directly into a wall, Mario can kick off it to change direction and gain height. Timing and execution are tricky, but mastery allows for some amazing shortcuts.



> **"With Super Mario 64 being the first of its kind, that became the de facto place to look for inspiration to solutions"**
> Chris Sutherland



» Chris Seavor was the brains behind *Conker's Bad Fur Day*.



» [N64] The camera would intelligently move to positions, likely to provide a helpful perspective.





Instead of the simple 'reach-the-goal' gameplay of 2D platform games, each course in *Super Mario 64* offered a selection of challenges, each of which awarded a Star upon completion. They could range from simply locating red coins to defeating bosses, winning races or just difficult platform challenges. Even Peach's Castle, the hub through which every other level was accessed, held Stars to find. Naturally, every player had their favourite moments. "Cool Cool Mountain was a favourite," says Gregg. "The way the slide race connected the top of the level to the bottom was really clever and Mario getting stuck head first in snow after a long fall was pure, indulgent charm."

"My memory is really fuzzy, but when I try to recall anything it's like looking at my happier moments of childhood," says Paul as he recounts some personal highlights. "Swinging Bowser by the tail. Finding that bottle underwater somewhere and being convinced that it held a door to a secret zone or something. We thought there would be treats hidden everywhere, and usually there was. Chasing the rabbit, because it was running away so may as well, and being led to something special." Mark found himself astounded by the longevity of the game. "Even later on, after you'd been playing the game for hours, there were new things to see," he remembers, "like when Mario turned into liquid metal. You then have this completely metal Mario, like the baddy from *Terminator 2*."



As soon as *Super Mario 64* became available in Japan on 23 June 1996, it began to receive rave reviews from the press. The list of accolades could run for pages, so we'll cut it down somewhat – 97% from *GamesMaster*, 96% each from *N64* and *Total 64*, 95% in *64 Magazine*. For the first time ever, *Edge* awarded its highest score of 10. Paul Davies called it "the best console game ever" in *Computer & Video Games* and he wasn't alone in making that claim, as *Maximum* concurred in its final issue. Enormous sales success accompanied the critical acclaim, with over 11 million copies making their way to players.

While *Super Mario 64* served as a source of boundless joy for players, it served as an enormous kick in the rear for developers of other 3D games – Nintendo was way out in front and everyone else was playing catch-up. "Every developer studied that game. Even more than ten years later it was quite common to see programmers boot up *Mario 64* to see how some aspect of the controls or camera systems worked," says John. "I'd say the first result of that was *Tomb Raider* which clearly benefited from that Shoshinkai 95 showing – particularly with the swimming controls."

Mark has a similar take on the game's influence. "It did definitely pave the way for the next generation of 3D platformers. Later games like *Banjo Kazooie* and *Donkey Kong 64*, two of my most favourite N64 titles, wouldn't have been as good had *Mario* not been as well put together," he remarks. "You can just see the programmers at Rare having *Super Mario* set up next to their stations looking at it and saying, 'Right, now we have to do *that* bit better.' And in a lot of cases, they did. But Mario showed the way forward."

Mark is dead on the money – the developers at Rare were definitely influenced by the work of what was then their parent company when creating those games. "At the time we [were] experimenting with a '2.5D' look for a platform game that felt like an evolution of the *Donkey Kong Country* games we had created, but after seeing *Mario 64* we knew fully-3D worlds were going to be the future," Gregg confirms. "In the past if we've looked to solve a problem we'd often look to see how other games have tackled similar issues," Chris Sutherland says. "With *Super Mario 64* being the first of its kind, that became the de facto place to look for inspiration to solutions when we started building 3D platformers on N64."

However, there were definitely areas in which the *Banjo-Kazooie* team looked to improve upon the *Super Mario 64* experience, and they put a lot of effort into distinguishing their game from Nintendo's classic. "We wanted to ensure *Banjo-Kazooie* had the Rare feel. I wanted Banjo the bear to have a very solid and predictable feel to his control, as opposed to the higher level of skill required to master the inertia that sometimes made *Mario*'s control challenging," notes



» [N64] If the camera ever proved unhelpful, you could even utilise a Mario's-perspective camera view.

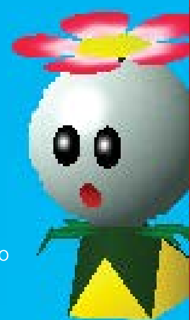




» [N64] Mario's classic animations were transferred flawlessly into 3D, like this jumping motion.

Gregg. "I also wanted our worlds to feel a lot more grounded, basing each one in believable realism that was given a fantastical and humorous twist."

"We wanted to see more visual detail," Chris Sutherland elaborates, "especially as we'd just been producing very detailed prerendered visuals with games like *Donkey Kong Country*. The challenge is to not overwhelm the player with detail – it still needs to be clear what items can be walked on, when a floor is slippy and so on. Likewise, we wanted the architecture/geometry of the worlds to be more complex and interesting – but in doing so, the camera that follows the player needs to become more complex and clever to handle unusual situations and to avoid confusing the player."



Getting the camera right is a task that Gregg remembers vividly. "When I played *Mario 64* I didn't feel the camera was that good, but the reality of just how hard a job this is to get right become apparent when we created our own camera systems," he reminisces. "In hindsight, *Mario*'s camera had the right goals in trying to be as dynamic as possible and mostly got it right. The 3D worlds that we created were even more complex than *Mario*'s and created major headaches for us. Sadly a good camera system is invisible and something nobody talks about, but one that has even minor problems gets a lot of attention."

With Rare more accustomed to 3D game development by the time of *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, ▶



» [N64] Metal Mario: heavy, but pretty unlikely to try to murder John Connor.

PLUMBING THE DEPTHS

Pushing Mario 64 in ways you wouldn't believe

As one of most-played games on the speedrun circuit, *Super Mario 64* has been pushed to the limits over the 20 years since its release. Countless bugs, glitches and quirks have been discovered in that time, some of which help towards the goal of getting completion times down, while others actively go against that concept. On the former front, various skips have been found that avoid triggering instances of text or brief cutscenes, each shaving valuable seconds off times. Far more noticeable, though, are the effects of the more significant glitches, most of which involve performing a backwards long jump (or BLJ for short) or some variant thereon. These can be used to skip the Star Doors that would otherwise gate access to the Bowser encounters, as well as the 'infinite staircase' that leads to the final level and showdown, making it possible to clear the game with far fewer than the 70 Stars usually required – the minimum was thought to be one (Board Bowser's Sub in Dire, Dire Docks) for a good while until an even more complex version of the BLJ trick was found that let that stage be skipped as well, opening the door to 0-Star runs (and ironically doing so without opening the door). These tricks allow for the credits to be reached in just a little over five minutes, while various categories exist for players who would still chase world record pace without having to use said tricks to do so.

At the other end of the spectrum lies the work of YouTuber pannenkoek2012, whose channel is filled with literally hundreds of videos in which he does everything from collecting every possible coin in each level to showcasing various glitches and oddities in the game that you won't see in a more refined speedrun where they would literally only cost time. More recently, however, he has found fame for a series of videos in which he attempts to collect many of the game's Stars in as few presses of the A button as is possible. These challenge runs, while interesting, only really started to garner attention in the last year or so, with commentated versions of several videos going so deep into the science of how each run works as to turn glitch mastery into an art form. In these videos (which are incredible, it must be said), you'll see how every stage exists on a near-infinite grid of so-called 'parallel universes', which have collision but no geometry; you'll hear terms like 'QPU Alignment', 'Syncing Speed', 'Half A-Press' and 'Held Object's Last Position' used in explaining feats of extreme mechanical manipulation; you'll discover just how long Mario needs to run on the spot in certain locations to build up enough speed to perform some of these crazy glitches (spoilers: it's *12 hours*).



» *Super Mario 64* is the most popular game on speedrun.com, with over 1,000 runners across a bunch of categories.

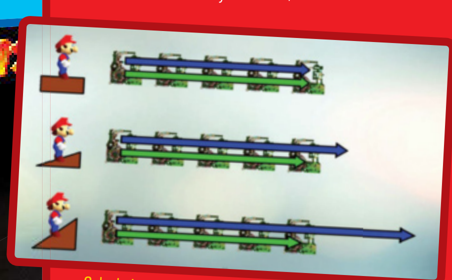
Many of us reflect on *Super Mario 64* as an incredible highlight of our gaming lives – an amazing introduction to 3D gaming that set the stage for much of what came after. But for others, it's an obsession. And whether that means treating it like a race or like an in-depth science experiment, the fact that players are still discovering new things about this game two decades after release is nothing short of incredible.

Further Reading:

speedrun.com/sm64 - The fastest runs of the game – 70-Star and 120-Star runs are pure skill exhibitions, while lower categories combine this with glitch exhibitions.

tasvideos.org/SM64TASHistory - Tool-assisted videos that show optimal routing and the evolution of glitch-led runs, from the first 16-Star run back in 2005 to the effectively perfect run recorded in 2012.

youtube.com/pannenkoek2012 - pannenkoek's YouTube channel, which goes into insane depth on just how far *Super Mario 64*'s mechanics can be twisted and broken.

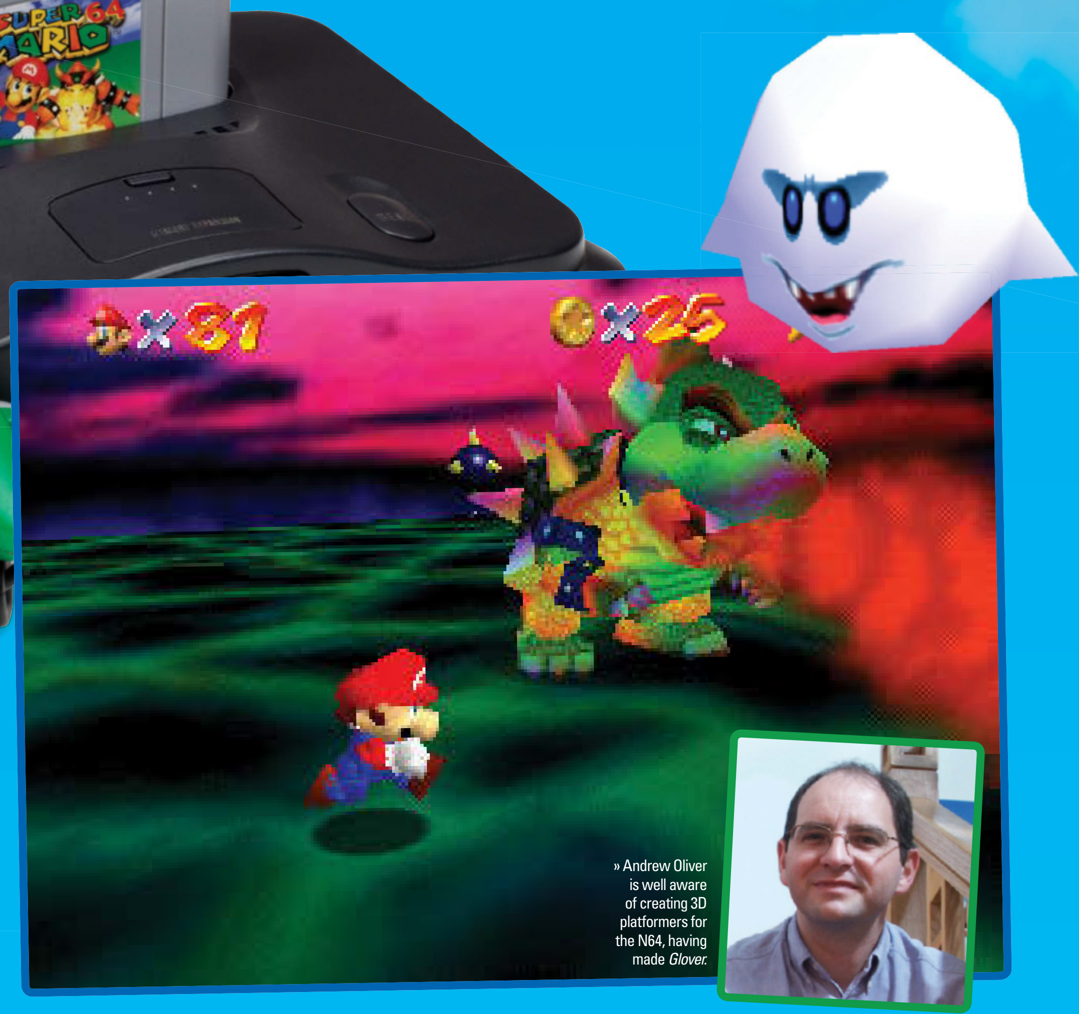


» Calculating Mario's speed based on terrain is an integral part of successfully visiting parallel universes.









» Andrew Oliver is well aware of creating 3D platformers for the N64, having made *Glover*.

many of those initial technical challenges were less of a problem. Still, it was a game which tried to top *Super Mario 64* in certain areas, and Chris Seavor pulls no punches in pointing them out. "The visuals… let's be honest, *Mario 64* had some ugly-looking assets in there," he notes, and it's fair to say that *Conker* came out ahead in this regard thanks to Rare's knowledge of the N64's hardware, and particularly its texturing quirks. The structure of the game was tweaked too. "We also added more of a narrative to the world, driving the player forward not so much to get the next Star, but to see where the stories and characters lead you."

Still, Gregg is under no illusions as to how difficult it was to compete with such a groundbreaking game. "*Mario 64* got so many things right that it was hard for following games to make significant improvements," he opines. "Other games had more impressive visuals, used the performance of the hardware better and created worlds that had more depth, but few got close to matching things like *Mario*'s control."

"Mario 64 got so many things right that it was hard for following games to make significant improvements"
Gregg Mayles

Over at Interactive Studios, the *Glover* team was discovering the same thing. "*Mario* set a high bar of quality to meet," says Andrew. "We were prototyping *Glover*, first on PC and then on an N64 dev kit, and we were getting great results that we were very happy with. But suddenly, we were playing a huge game that had solved a few problems more elegantly that we had. For example, it had smoothed-skinned characters, unlike the hinged, segmented 3D characters that PlayStation and *Glover* had! We decided we had to ensure our characters looked just as smooth and had to work out how to make an animated skinned character renderer." That wasn't the only innovation that Andrew and the *Glover* team had to compete with. "We just spent ages trying to work out what the logic was for the camera so we could get somewhere close," he remarks. "Technically we figured out most things, as *Glover* demonstrates, but *Mario* was still obviously a better game."

With the developers telling us how far they went to match Nintendo's effort, it's clear that *Super Mario 64* had a huge impact on videogames, so we asked them to quantify it. For John, it was a game that accelerated the pace of progress in game development. "Nintendo solved the problems of third-person control in 3D video games and presented the industry with a 'how to do it' in the form of *Mario 64*," he says. "I think the industry would have figured it out eventually without Nintendo's help but *Mario 64* saved us probably five years worth of failed experiments and clunky controls."

For Andrew, it was nothing less than proof that polygon technology was actually viable. "It made everyone realise that 3D was the future, and not just of driving games, but all games! It looked so good, and gave some personality to the characters," he says. "The worlds were big and interesting and it immersed players in a deep and beautiful fantasy world. Over on the PlayStation, it still felt that 3D was struggling and whilst technically impressive, the gameplay or graphics were generally suffering for the 3D experience. *Mario 64* showed the way forward for the whole industry!"

"It was the first of its kind and a genuine 'Wow Moment' in gaming that excited even the most jaded of people. It was a combination of revolution combined with one of the most prominent and successful series of games," says Gregg, summarising the legacy of the game. However, he also adds a important point: "It's also stood the test of time. Play *Mario 64* today and it's still got the ability to transform you into a playful child where just doing things without thought is great fun."

That's the key thing to remember about *Mario 64*. It was undoubtedly a groundbreaking and technologically-impressive game, as the developers we've spoken to have testified. Time marches on though, and other games have entered the conversation as points of reference for 3D game design. If *Super Mario 64* had just been a technical achievement, we'd remember it as an important release. But *Super Mario 64* was always a supremely enjoyable game first and foremost – and the decades that have passed since it released haven't dulled that in the slightest.



» [N64] Challenges for Stars were rather unusual compared to previous *Mario* games – this Koopa wants to race you.



» [N64] Using the analogue stick gently, Mario can tiptoe past this sleeping enemy without waking it.

There were years when I didn't play it and when I got back into retro games I worried that it might not have aged well and I was hesitant to have another go at it," Mark confesses. "But I can happily report that even now, with the novelty of the graphics having worn off, *Mario 64* is still one of the best and most fun games to play on any machine *ever*!" He's in no doubt as to why that is, too. "Nintendo didn't just rely on the graphics to wow everyone, they also concentrated on the puzzles and gameplay. So they still spent as much time on the gameplay as they had done on the previous *Mario* titles but had added in this huge world that seemingly burst out of this little bit of plastic you just stuck in the top of your machine before you turned it on."

That's why *Super Mario 64* is still as relevant today as it has ever been. The kids who grew up with N64s are adults now, and their love for the game and its successors is the reason behind the success of crowdfunding campaigns for traditional 3D platformer revivals, including *A Hat In Time* and Playtonic's *Yooka-Laylee*. *Super Mario 64*'s supreme gameplay is the reason that people are still playing today, years after most people nabbed that last Star and had a chat with Yoshi on top of the castle. People simply aren't tired of the game – and if you needed any proof of that, hop online and look at the abundance of *Super Mario 64* speedruns, challenge runs and modified versions.

But don't take our word for it. Dig out a copy of *Super Mario 64* and start up a new file. Spend a minute or two pottering around the castle to get a feel for how Mario controls before leaping into Bob-Omb Battlefield. We'd be surprised if those few minutes don't turn into hours – and years later, developers are still trying to make games that are so compelling. *



» [N64] Most of the extended cast was absent for *Super Mario 64* – Luigi doesn't appear, and Yoshi only has a cameo.

LEAPS OF FAITH

Five games that made the jump to 3D in style…



METROID PRIME 2002

■ Many wondered how the exploration of *Metroid* could ever work in 3D, but Retro Studios came through with the perfect answer. Encapsulating *Metroid*'s sense of isolation and freedom, while being a showcase for the GameCube, it's one of the greatest examples of 2D-to-3D done right.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME 1998

■ Just as it had done with *Super Mario 64*, Nintendo embraced the third dimension when updating *Zelda* for a new generation. The game was imbued with a very real sense of verticality that helped make it absolutely jaw-dropping.

GRAND THEFT AUTO III 2001

■ Alongside *Super Mario 64* and *Ocarina Of Time*, *GTA III* was instrumental in establishing the template for modern 3D games, especially open world titles. Minimal prelaunch fanfare only made its impact all the more incredible and it had a real sense of place and personality.



FINAL FANTASY VII 1997

■ A curious case study, as the move to 3D graphics actually had little impact on the gameplay formula. It did, however, allow for impressive cutscenes and a more cinematic feel – two things that both tied in beautifully to the greater storage capacity CDs had over cartridges.

METAL GEAR SOLID 1998

■ As with *FFVII*, the polygons of *MGS* allowed for a then-unprecedented level of cinematic presentation. Kojima and his team took this concept and ran with it, too – Snake's PlayStation sneaking mission is widely accepted to be the birthplace of modern cinematic gaming.

…and five that stumbled and fell into the depths of infamy

FADE TO BLACK 1995

■ Many would argue that *Flashback* never needed a sequel, and this oddity serves as evidence for the truth of that statement. Crude 3D visuals were a far cry from the mind-blowing original, it's redeemed somewhat by its decent character animation.



BUBSY 3D 1996

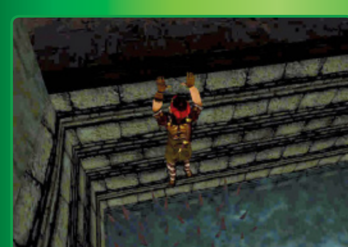
■ Famously one of the worst games ever made, this took the unlikable *Sonic* rip-off, dumped him into an ugly 3D world that looked to be made out of placeholder assets and left it at that. Random deaths and horrendous pop-in abound in this abhorrent waste of time and money.

EARTHWORM JIM 3D 1999

■ Handing the reins to an untested developer for something so difficult as making the jump from 2D to full 3D doesn't sound like the best of plans, as this effort proves. Bland environments were a departure from the colourful backdrops of the original and the camera had a mind of its own.

CASTLEVANIA 64 1999

■ One of the reasons people thought *Metroid* could never work in 3D was that *Castlevania* struggled to transition. Camera once again proved to be fatally flawed in early attempts at 3D vampire hunting, at odds with the pinpoint precision for which the series was known.



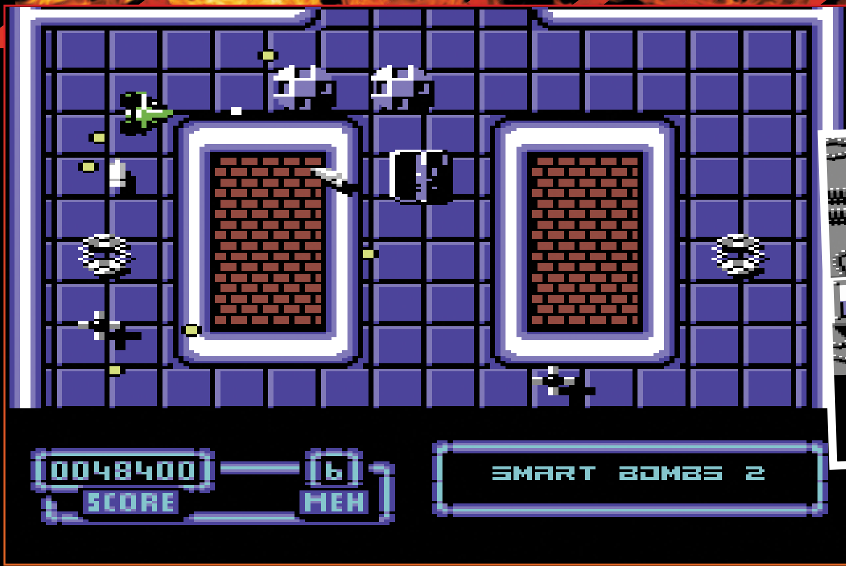
PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D 1999

■ While this 3D debut wasn't as dreadful as some efforts, its poor control and awkward animations were just made to look even worse thanks to how impressive these aspects had been in the original game. The camera was also horrible – a standard pitfall of 3D gaming.



MARAUDER

On advice from Andrew Hewson, coder Mark Kelly teamed up with artist Steve Crow. They tell Rory Milne how they created their classic shooter…



» [C64] Captain Cobra braves a hail of bullets in the second stage's frenzied end-of-level firefight.





> "Initially it was just myself and a few contractors. These were fun times, raw and simple"
> Mark Kelly

Eighties gaming seems littered with kids who chose development over degrees and students who quit higher education to write games. Mark Kelly's story differs, however, as he cleverly combined college with games design and formed a development team between lectures, as he explains when asked about Arcanum Software. "Arcanum was the first company that I founded – back in 1985, while at college. It was focused on building C64 games. Arcanum was based in Glasgow. Our location had little effect on finding publishers, and it was a benefit for bringing in developers, but communications took a lot longer, especially when waiting for feedback and comment. Initially it was just myself and a few contractors. These were fun times, raw and simple."

Less fun, though, was that Arcanum's debut titles – a coin-op clone and the multi-genre *Captain Courageous* – were both cancelled. Mark's response was to work with his publisher to ensure Arcanum's next project would be both original and focused. "*Captain Courageous* was a classic example of biting off more than you can chew. The decision to make *Marauder* around a singular focus was at the advice of Andrew Hewson. I don't recall the initial introduction with Andrew and [his] team, but they were involved early on and throughout the development – and they introduced me to Steve Crow."



» [C64] Seconds into *Marauder*'s first stage, Captain Cobra drives his battlecar into heavy crossfire.

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON CONSULTANTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** ARCANUM SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **PLATFORM:** C64, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

OVERLORD
SYSTEM: NES
YEAR: 1990

SWITCHBLADE II (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ST
YEAR: 1995

SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
SYSTEM: SATURN
YEAR: 1996

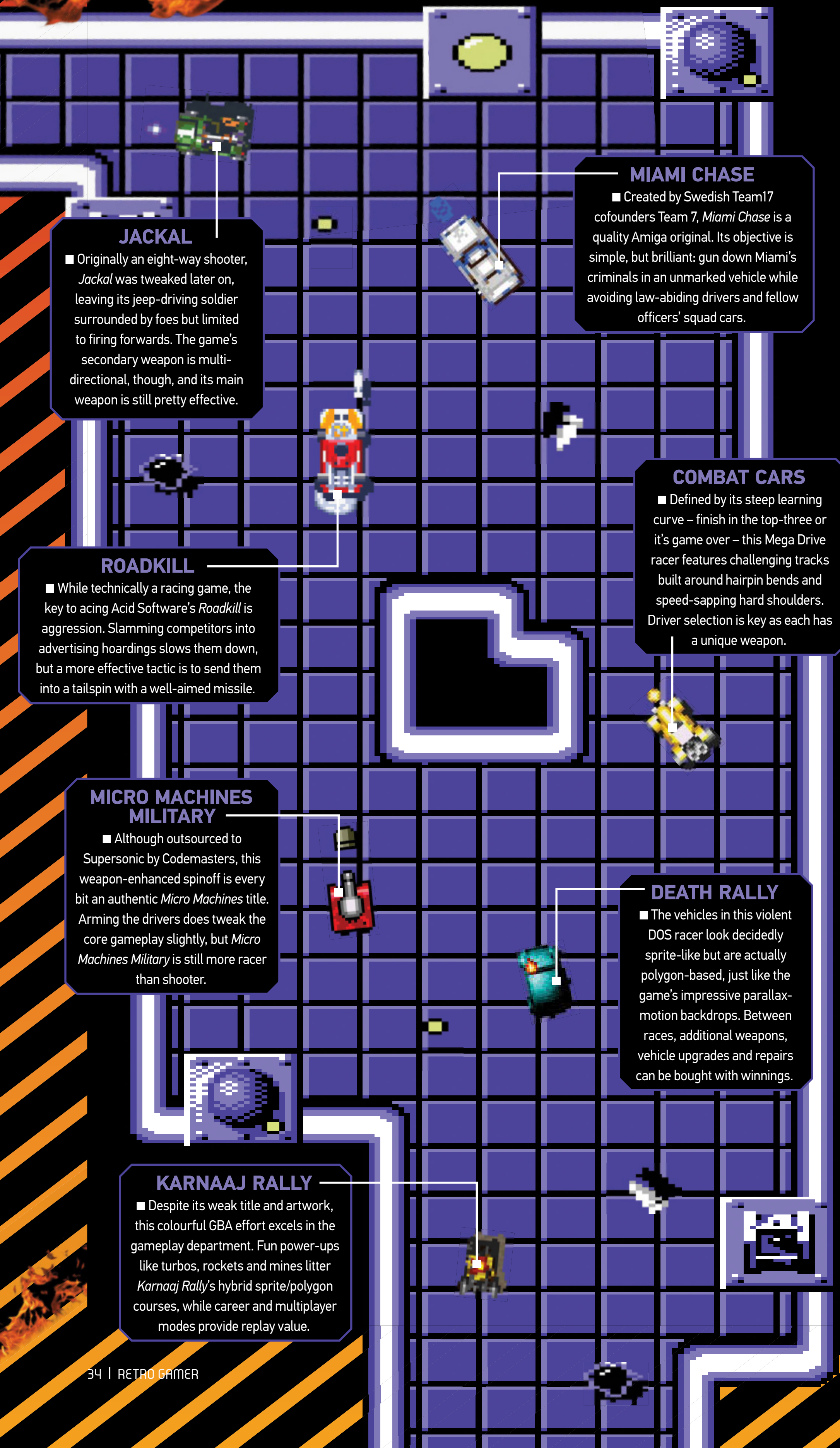
Having recently changed roles from Spectrum developer to artist, *Marauder* would mark Steve Crow's entry into C64 graphic design, but he remembers Arcanum being more of a culture shock than sprites. "Andrew Hewson flew me up to Glasgow, so I got to meet Mark and visit Arcanum's offices. I remember everyone had thick Glaswegian accents and I had a hard time understanding some of Mark's friends and colleagues! We must have discussed a lot that day and mapped out a game plan for the graphics. This was before email, so we must have stayed in touch by phone and mailing disks to each other."

Communications aside, Mark cites several aspects of *Marauder* that had to be considered early on. "We did some planning on paper first to get the concept down. Once the game started to take shape, new ideas would emerge and they would be incorporated into the scope. We had numerous sources of inspiration – especially from our local arcade. There were a bunch of games that we were playing around this time, but *Commando* and *Rush 'N' Crash* stand out. The storyline and setting were just your typical, clichéd sci-fi worlds – which we loved. Our primary influence was from other games. While I can't say that any specific movie or TV show had a direct influence, we did watch a ton of stuff – and I am sure a lot of that helped shape our direction. Art books from Paper Tiger – Roger Dean, etc. – did have an influence on the overall style and ideas."

As the basics of *Marauder* took shape, work started on the game's graphics, which Mark describes as a paper exercise. "The graphics that I did for fonts, bullets, parallax art, etc. were done on graph paper first and then bit-encoded into the system. Steve ▶

GUNS 'N' GASOLINE

More notable top-down armed-vehicle games



JACKAL

■ Originally an eight-way shooter, *Jackal* was tweaked later on, leaving its jeep-driving soldier surrounded by foes but limited to firing forwards. The game's secondary weapon is multi-directional, though, and its main weapon is still pretty effective.

MIAMI CHASE

■ Created by Swedish Team17 cofounders Team 7, *Miami Chase* is a quality Amiga original. Its objective is simple, but brilliant: gun down Miami's criminals in an unmarked vehicle while avoiding law-abiding drivers and fellow officers' squad cars.

ROADKILL

■ While technically a racing game, the key to acing Acid Software's *Roadkill* is aggression. Slamming competitors into advertising hoardings slows them down, but a more effective tactic is to send them into a tailspin with a well-aimed missile.

COMBAT CARS

■ Defined by its steep learning curve – finish in the top-three or it's game over – this Mega Drive racer features challenging tracks built around hairpin bends and speed-sapping hard shoulders. Driver selection is key as each has a unique weapon.

MICRO MACHINES MILITARY

■ Although outsourced to Supersonic by Codemasters, this weapon-enhanced spinoff is every bit an authentic *Micro Machines* title. Arming the drivers does tweak the core gameplay slightly, but *Micro Machines Military* is still more racer than shooter.

DEATH RALLY

■ The vehicles in this violent DOS racer look decidedly sprite-like but are actually polygon-based, just like the game's impressive parallax-motion backdrops. Between races, additional weapons, vehicle upgrades and repairs can be bought with winnings.

KARNAAJ RALLY

■ Despite its weak title and artwork, this colourful GBA effort excels in the gameplay department. Fun power-ups like turbos, rockets and mines litter *Karnaaj Rally*'s hybrid sprite/polygon courses, while career and multiplayer modes provide replay value.

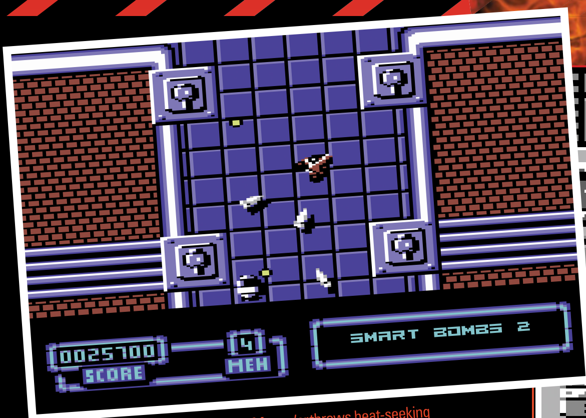
▶ did a lot of his work on the computer." Artist Steve Crow equates his work on *Marauder* to being passed a baton and references a childhood toy as an influence. "I think the graphics for the game were already under development when I became involved. So some of the style was already established and I added new visuals and probably polished what was already done. Mark had this really neat homing missile and I remember creating a silo for it. The silo flipped over and launched the rocket – the inspiration for this came from a Dinky model of Gerry Anderson's UFO 'SHADO 2' I had as a child."

Aside from drafting and incorporating visuals, Mark also had to manage *Marauder*'s level designs, which would be notable for their maze-like sections. "We used paper and a simple editor to create the levels. The paper sketches were used to get a general flow of the level layout. The editor was used to block out the layout and do the placement. It was created on a second C64 that allowed us to create the map and push it directly into the game. We created custom hardware to allow the systems to talk to each other using the C64 user port to handle the data-flow back and forth. The maze-like pathways were just map ideas to give the player some basic choices and variety as they progressed through the game. *Marauder* was always a shooter with very little consideration of a maze structure."

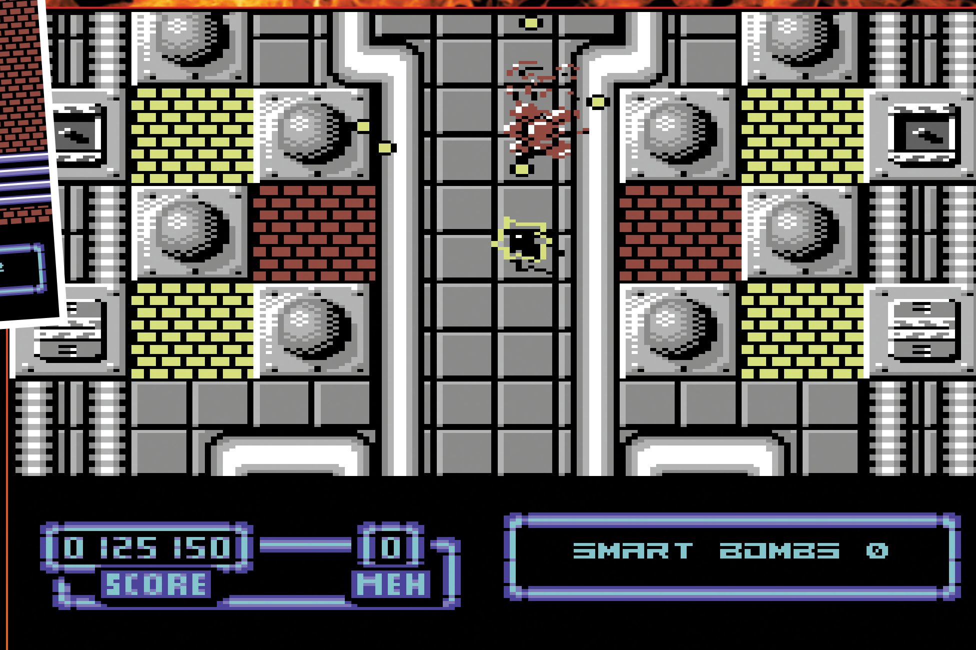
Besides overseeing *Marauder*'s levels, Mark also ensured that they were filled with armaments such as homing missiles, aerial bombers and colour-coded turrets – which released power-ups or punishments when destroyed. "As we worked on the project, we came up with more ideas. Frequent visits to the local arcades and input from playtesters added to the enemies list, weapons and hazards. The homing missiles were born from a demo that I was playing with to have little insects chase you around the screen. We had several places on the map that were safe zones, but the [homing] missiles would keep you on your toes. We had a lot of fun creating different variations of the missile logic. In the end, the final version had a nice blend of attack while taking its time to lock in on you. Some of the others were crazy, making the game extremely difficult to play. The air attacks were born from our love of scrolling shooters – a la *1942*, etc.. These were especially effective when creating narrow corridors that made it extra challenging to get through. [The turrets were] there to make the player wait around and distract their attention – greed kills! It was amazing that such a



» [ZX Spectrum] The Spectrum port of *Marauder*, like the Amstrad offering, was handled by Casey Bee Games.



» [C64] As well as constant gunfire, *Marauder* throws heat-seeking missiles at the game's hero, Captain Cobra.



» [C64] Going down in a blaze of glory against superior firepower in level five's end battle.

simple feature got so much attention and praise. To us, it was just another hazard that you had to deal with."

Although these armaments provided *Marauder*'s core gameplay, Arcanum also added end-level assaults as brutal as any 'bullet hell' title, as Mark now acknowledges. "It was not our intent, but yes, it was an early example of bullet hell. But there was no thought given to that at the time, it was just a way to ramp up the difficulty in the game. This also highlights another issue that we had with *Marauder* – we played it so much that we tuned it to become extremely difficult. Towards the end, I could play through many levels with one hand on my old faithful Atari and Kempston joysticks. While this was great during development and debugging, it was a major oversight on our part."

And while further refinements to *Marauder*'s gameplay followed, Mark notes a couple of features that his team stopped short of implementing: forced-scrolling and a two-player mode. "I love forced-scrolling games like *R-Type*, etc.. We experimented with having a blend which allowed for push-scrolling and then vertical forced-scrolling. The challenge was that it created numerous areas where you got trapped on the map. In hindsight, if we had gone for a right-to-left scroller, this would have made way more sense. We also experimented on making *Marauder* a co-op game. But we ran into some issues with the additional elements on the screen: the extra player and associated bullets. We even had it working, albeit crudely, on two different C64s using the user port to network them. But the deadline put these sorts of experiments on the back-burner."

In addition to enforcing deadlines, Arcanum's publisher, Hewson Consultants, also gave regular – if delayed – feedback on *Marauder*, which was gratefully received by Mark. "During development, there would be great feedback from Hewson. It was a slower process back then: send in a new version on disc or cassette and then a few weeks later get a bunch of comments and feedback. This is when we are started using VHS tapes as a way to communicate a specific issue, [such as]: 'Go to 13:31 on the tape to see the bullet glitch issues.' That was very helpful as remote developers."



» [Amstrad CPC] The Amstrad version had surprisingly decent scrolling and was nice and colourful to boot.

ANDREW HEWSON ON MARAUDER

"The reception to *Marauder* was lukewarm, but I don't recall feeling one way or the other about it. We produced a lot of games that were critically acclaimed, but you can't expect that to happen all the time. I'm not sure what effect, if any, the *ZZAP!64* review had on sales. It's very difficult to measure these things. It's interesting [that] the reviewers [thought] *Marauder* didn't fit with our reputation for innovation. I think *Marauder* was a good game, but perhaps it wasn't as 'cutting edge' as some of our earlier games. I'm afraid the sales were not strong enough for us to consider doing a sequel. Development costs were rising rapidly and you have to place your bets very carefully."

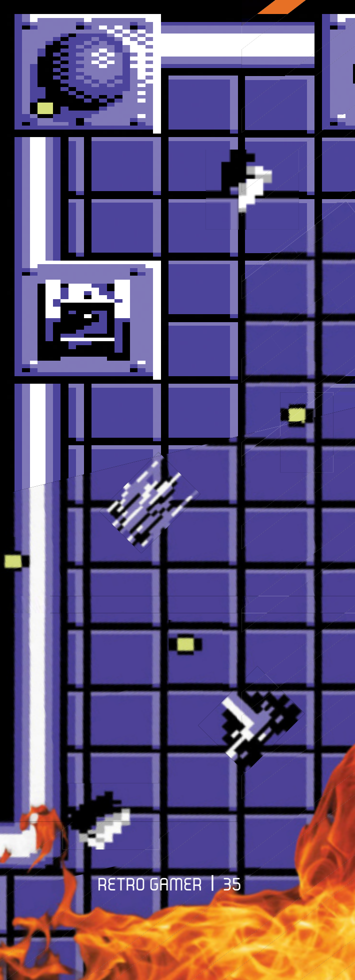
But despite the distance separating *Marauder*'s developers from its publisher and lead artist, the game was released to positive reviews from all but one C64 publication, although Mark took this in his stride. "It is almost impossible to please everyone. Like one of my professors at college once said: 'Those who can do, those that can't review.' But other magazines were more favourable. Looking back, and based on how hard the game was, *Zzap!64* did nail a bunch of key issues."

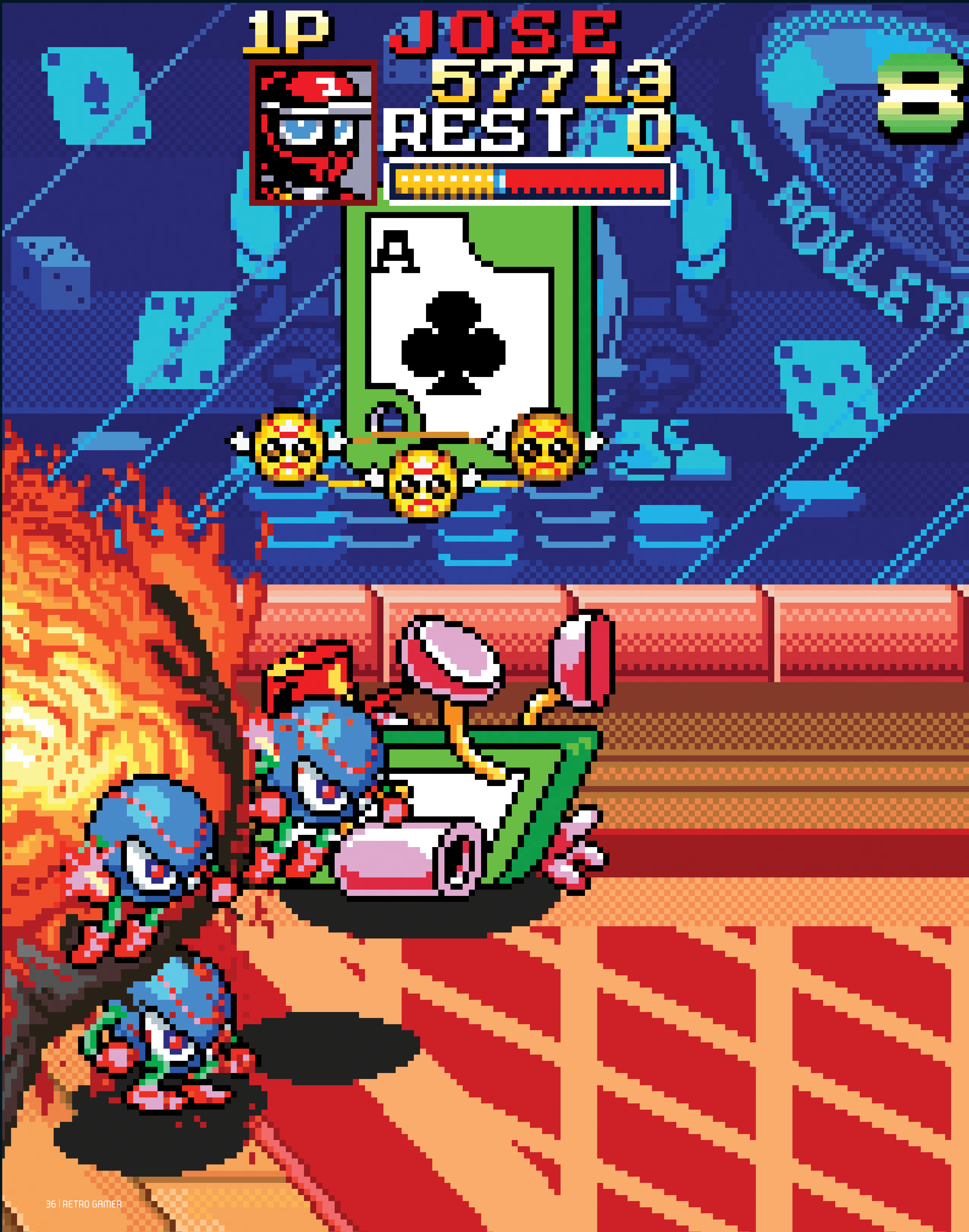
Marauder adaptations for the Spectrum and Amstrad were outsourced. These gained greater critical acclaim than Arcanum's original, which Mark puts down to their difficulty curves. "Keith Burkhill was brought in about three quarters of the way through the development cycle for *Marauder* to do the other versions. Both were great – I especially liked the Spectrum version. [But Keith] did have the advantage of knowing not to make it too difficult to play! I recall that the ramping of difficulty felt smoother. The C64 version ramped up far quicker."

On the Spectrum conversion, Steve makes it clear that this was one project that he was content to leave to others. "I was happy having the added flexibility of the C64 graphics and to let someone else deal with Spectrum graphics and colour attributes problems. Hardware multi-colour sprites – are you kidding me?"

Mark's final words on *Marauder* are about his C64 original, a project the developer seems keen to revisit one day. "I still love that style of game. Perhaps a revisit of the overall concept would be a good idea, especially with today's graphics and VR options! But I am proud of everything that I have created – both the good and the bad. As long as I am creating, I am happy." ★

Thanks to Mark and Steve for revisiting *Marauder*.




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COME ON

Ninja Baseball Bat Man

THEY BUILT IT, WE CAME

» RETROREVIVAL



» ARCADE » IREM » 1993

We're often asked not to judge books by their covers, and I don't. Who needs to see the whole cover when a name is so often sufficient? *Ninja Baseball Bat Man* is a perfect example. Here's a game that revolves around a character whose combat style incorporates classical Japanese spy arts and the unsubtle blunt force assault that only sporting equipment can adequately deliver. I don't care what else is going on, this is clearly something I want to be involved with.

Thankfully, unlike the various other games I've acquired because of their amusing names (*Bionic Granny* and *Ninjabread Man* being the most notable examples), Irem's scrolling beat-'em-up is actually a good game. Your titular hero is a versatile fighter with a variety of attacks, from a standard bat combo to a special swing, jumping kicks and even a desperate slide. What's more, it's an enormously pretty game – it's colourful and features some absolutely enormous enemies, particularly the towering bosses. The game's awesome cartoonish style helps to convey its sense of humour, too. You can go from lobbing a home plate at an animated catcher's mitt to fighting a gigantic man made of balls, and then on to mowing down a group of baddies in a car.

In fact, apart from the occasional super-damaging boss attack that seems designed to siphon the hard-earned coins from your pocket, the only thing inherently wrong with *Ninja Baseball Bat Man* is the fact that it didn't receive a home conversion. After all, with a name like that, how could it fail to sell? *





The Hit Squad

Where there's muck there's money, they say, and with The Hit Squad label that generally rings true. Martyn Carroll looks at the budget range from a collector's point of view and reveals the rarest titles out there







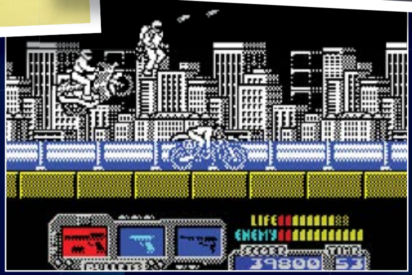
» Quality releases from Activision and Domark soon joined the growing range.



■ = ZX Spectrum, ■ = Amstrad CPC, ■ = C64, ■ = BBC Micro, ■ = Atari 8-Bit, ■ = C16, ■ = MSX
A = Arcade Collection, M = Movie Collection, S = Sports Collection

By all rights, The Hit Squad range shouldn't be written about or remembered at all. This was a collection of cheap rereleases, recorded onto low-cost cassettes and stuck into small plastic cases alongside flimsy inlays. It was Ocean Software's way of eking extra cash out of old games and the releases were typically overlooked at the time. In the early-to-mid Nineties, when the 8-bit gaming market was shrinking, magazines like *Commodore Force*, *Your Sinclair* and *Amstrad Action* would issue a collective sigh when they reviewed *another* budget reissue, and readers eager for new releases echoed the sentiment. So why on earth would anyone want to collect Hit Squad titles nowadays?

Collectors will know why. Firstly, the releases all feature a uniform style, with impactful red spine text, outlined in yellow, on a blue background. With the spines aligned they look great on a shelf. Secondly, and most importantly, the releases are all numbered. We're not talking about a small stock code hidden on the rear of the inlay, but a prominent number displayed on the spine. That's like catnip for collectors. Plus, organising them in a collection is as easy as one, two, three.



» [ZX Spectrum] Arcade conversion *Sly Spy* was published as a Hit Squad title after the original full-price release was withdrawn.

The releases are split into three categories – Arcade, Movie and Sports – and each has its own set of sequentially-numbered titles. So as the collecting habit takes hold you start to acquire every title in a category, and then before you know it you're frantically trying to amass every release for a single format. Like Panini stickers, you've got to get the set! There are 119 titles on the Commodore 64, 115 on the Spectrum and 114 on the Amstrad CPC. There are also several titles spread across the BBC Micro, Atari 8-bit, Commodore 16 and MSX (the range is also available on the Amiga, ST and PC, but these are not individually numbered so don't attract the same attention as the 8-bit releases).

An added bonus – 'muck' analogy aside – is that the range includes some of the very ▶



» [ZX Spectrum] *The Legend Of Kage* was a plausible Hit Squad release, but appears to be nothing more than a rumour.



» [C64] The C64 version of *Hard Drivin'* arrived on the label after debuting on a compilation. It was still a car crash.

5 BEST RELEASES

The Hit Squad is home to many classic titles and here's five of the very best

ARKANOID

A7 | A7 | A7 | A2 | A2 | A1



■ Along with *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*, this was available for the widest number of formats, appearing on six in total. And generally they're all very good, with perhaps the MSX release (pictured) just coming out as the best 8-bit version overall. In a way *Arkanoid* was the perfect Hit Squad title, as some will have surely overlooked this bat-and-ball game at full price (as did *Crash* magazine). At budget price though it was a no-brainer.

BUBBLE BOBBLE

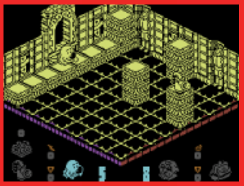
A30 | A30 | A31



■ Ocean scored a massive critical hit with its conversions of *Rainbow Islands*, so it wisely went back and grabbed Bub and Bob's first adventure (initially published by Firebird) for The Hit Squad label. All three versions – Spectrum, CPC and particularly C64 (pictured) – were excellent and provided a ridiculous amount of fun for such a small outlay, especially if you blasted baddies alongside a friend in co-op mode.

HEAD OVER HEELS

A12 | A12 | A13 | A3



■ A title that needs little introduction in this publication. This was the game that made isometric adventures essential again, thanks to its dual-character gameplay mechanic, fiendish room designs and sharp sense of humour (realised through excellent sprite work). At budget price it was even more unmissable. *Your Sinclair* awarded the rerelease 98% and it's hard to argue with that.

INTERNATIONAL KARATE+

S8 | S8 | S8



■ The Spectrum and CPC versions were perfectly fine updates of the original game, and by extension the ground-breaking *Way of the Exploding Fist*, but it was the mighty C64 version that delivered a devastating jab to the face of other 8-bit fighting games. Adding a third fighter was a genius move and perhaps the only downer was an unpleasant Steven Seagal cameo on the redone Hit Squad cover art.

CHASE HQ

A35 | A35 | A36



■ The darling of 8-bit driving games and rightfully so. The Spectrum version was a conversion masterclass and the CPC version (pictured) was perhaps even better thanks to its wider use of colour. If you'd somehow missed this at full price or on a compilation, then the Hit Squad release was there to right that wrong. There are whispers of a C64 version but let's just pretend that it's a rumour and move swiftly on.

5 RARITIES

A round-up of the scarcest, most sought-after titles in the range

SPACE GUN

A57 A58



■ This was a coin-op conversion of another Taito shooting game, but it arrived late in the 8-bit era and didn't attract the same attention as the earlier *Operation* games. This rerelease landed later still, in mid-1993, so it would not have sold in great numbers. This is why it can now fetch up to £30 on C64 and Spectrum (the CPC release was a disk-exclusive title so it wasn't included in the range).

DARKMAN

M29 M29 M28



■ One of Ocean's many movie licences, based on a great film that performed poorly at the box office. The game itself was pretty decent but this rerelease crept out so late that nobody really noticed (the Spectrum version was reviewed in the penultimate issue of *Your Sinclair*, dated August 1993). These days it's worth around £30. Hudson Hawk is a similar title in many ways, worth around the same price.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

M30 M30 M29



■ Another late movie license of the era and another rerelease that can now fetch £30 or more when it comes up for sale. It holds the distinction of being Ocean's final ever release for the Spectrum and does seem to attract the most attention when the Sinclair version surfaces (which isn't too often). It's a nice, colourful game across all versions which makes parting with the cash a little easier.

WWF EUROPEAN RAMPAGE TOUR

S23



■ This is where it gets interesting. The Hit Squad release of the first *WWF* game was a strong seller on the C64 so Ocean also reissued the follow-up (which wasn't developed for the Spectrum and CPC). However, it was a very average wrestler and didn't sell well, which is why it's now super scarce. This never comes up for sale these days. If it did it's sure to go for at least £50 and probably higher.

LETHAL WEAPON

M31



■ This C64 release was a fun platformer with cartoon-like sprites that did a commendable job of replicating Mel's mullet. Along with the second *WWF* game (and you could include *Hook* too) this is one of the C64 exclusives that's causing headaches for Hit Squad collectors. Unlike *Cool World*, it definitely exists but those that own it don't want to part with it! Unless you have a copy you're willing to sell?





» New additions to the range were heavily advertised in the gaming magazines of the day.

> "There are few that fall into the rare category – mostly the later games when the user base had moved to other computers"
>
> Mick Spence

▶ best titles available for each format with very few duffers. This harks back to the original purpose of the label which was to resell the biggest and best titles by packaging them together on value compilations – the first being 1985's *They Sold A Million*. The Hit Squad was originally a collaboration between Ocean and games distributor CentreSoft, which is why titles from a range of publishers were featured. Then in 1989, following the success of US Gold's Kixx label and Elite Software's Encore range, Ocean adopted The Hit Squad as its own budget label with rereleases retailing for £2.99 (later £3.99). Besides hits from its huge back catalogue, the range also included titles from the likes of Activision, Domark, Ubisoft and System 3. It proved to be a massive success for the firm. In the 1993 Hit Squad catalogue Ocean chairman David Ward wrote:

"When we took the decision to launch The Hit Squad in early 1989 we were unaware that the company would become a major software publisher in its own right. Currently boasting a catalogue of over 345 8-bit titles, the bedrock philosophy remains the same today as it did at its launch – provide the ever-expanding software userbase with the opportunity to purchase classic titles at a reduced retail price."

The Hit Squad slogan, "Top-quality games at rock-bottom prices," is sure to raise a wry smile with collectors as some of the titles command high prices these days. Only some mind – the majority are very common and can be picked up for £5 or less, enabling collectors to amass a lot of titles without spending too much. A handful of the later titles are much harder to come by however, as they didn't



» The full *Cool World* review from *Commodore Force* magazine. If Ocean pulled the release, did any copies slip out?



COLLECTOR Q&A

Sinclair collector Mick Spence talks about taking on The Hit Squad

Why did you decide to collect Hit Squad titles?
I started collecting them originally because of the inlay sleeve artwork. I always liked how they looked great lined up side-by-side on a shelf. And secondly, because at the time I thought it would be relatively easy to collect the set.

So have you struggled to get them all?
At the moment I have the whole Spectrum set minus nine titles. I hope at some point I'll be able to complete the set but the ones I'm missing seldom show up for sale or trade.

In your experience, which titles are the rarest Spectrum releases?
There are quite a few that fall into the rare category – mostly the later games when the userbase had moved over to other computers. I'd say *Darkman*, *Space Gun* and *Castle Master* are the ones most collectors are looking for. The most I've paid for a single title is £30 for *Pit-Fighter*.

Rumours persist about undiscovered releases. Do you know anything about these and if they even exist?
I've read the rumours about *The Legend Of Kage* and *Firefly*. I've seen pictures of complete sets but a set is only complete when every title released is present. A lot of collectors use the lists on the World Of Spectrum website to work through and they're not always 100 per cent accurate. For example, I also collect Kixx titles and I recently found *Night Shift* which isn't on the WOS Kixx list. Once I complete a publisher I'm always left feeling, 'Do I *really* have the full set or are there more out there!'

What do you feel is the best way to grab them?
The best way I've found is to set up eBay notifications for publishers and to join communities – which was the reason I set up Sinclair For Sale on Facebook. I check shops, real and online, and there's car boots, which everyone else has more luck with than me!

Which other software ranges would you recommend as good ones to collect?
Kixx releases are great to collect and are pretty easy to find, until like The Hit Squad you get to releases from 1990 onwards. Codemasters is another good one, and Mastertronic and Sinclair too. There are a lot but personally I go for the ones that look great together on a shelf.





arrive until 1993 by which point many gamers had moved on from 8-bit computers. It's highly doubtful that many copies of *Darkman*, *Hudson Hawk* or *The Addams Family* were sold at the time, hence why they can now fetch £30-40 or sometimes even higher. And that's when they do surface. Some of the scarcest titles rarely ever come up for sale.

Like any large collection, The Hit Squad throws up some interesting quirks for collectors. Those with OCD tendencies will be rankled to see the game logo used on the *Batman* spine rather than the usual Hit Squad type. The three *Fun School* rereleases do the same and they don't feature spine numbers either. *Trivial Pursuit* and *Pictionary* are also numberless, presumably because they didn't fit into the three main categories. Even more irksome for collectors is that on the C64 there is no Movie No.6, but two Movie No.7s (*Predator* and *Miami Vice*), proving that someone somewhere messed up the numbers.

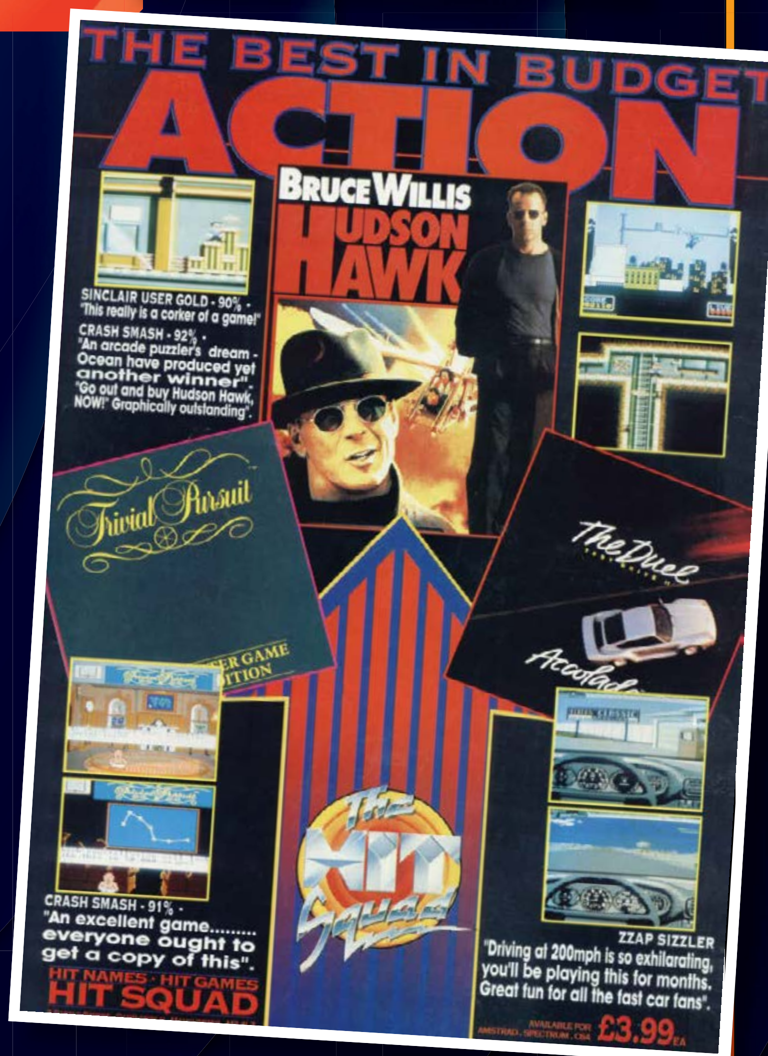
Also interesting is the presence of *Sly Spy* on C64, CPC and Spectrum. This coin-op conversion was due to be released by Ocean as a full-price title in 1990, and even picked up some decent reviews, but was pulled at the last minute for reasons unknown. Some copies did leak out, and it popped up on compilations, but the game received its first general release on The Hit Squad. Similarly, *Hard Drivin'* on the C64 initially appeared on a compilation but made its standalone debut on the label.



» [C64] System 3 classic *Last Ninja 2* proved to be a very agreeable addition to the collection.

Finally there's plenty of speculation about missing-in-action Hit Squad releases. Both *Firefly* and *The legend of Kage* have been listed as titles, and *Galaxy Force* was even reviewed in *Zzap!64*, but the fact that there are no gaps in the numbering system suggests that these were never released. However, the rerelease of *Cool World* on the C64 was not only reviewed in *Commodore Force* but was also advertised by Ocean as arriving in January 1994. This places it *after Lethal Weapon*, so could *Cool World* actually be Movie No.32 – the long-lost, final release in The Hit Squad's 8-bit range? Ocean used The Hit Squad branding overseas too, notably in Europe and Australia, resulting in some high-coveted releases – including some 'holy grails' on C64 disk – that are destined to keep collectors digging deep. ★

Special thanks to Mick Spence and David McClelland for their help.





The Hit

The complete list of all 122 titles across seven

	Spectrum	Amstrad	C64	BBC	Atari 800	C16	MSX
007: Licence To Kill	M17	M17	M16				
007: The Spy Who Loved Me	M23	M23	M22				
Addams Family, The	M30	M30	M29				
Afterburner	A21	A21	A22				
Altered Beast	A38	A38	A39				
APB	A29	A29	A30				
Arkanoid	A7	A7	A7	A2	A2		A1
Arkanoid: Revenge of Doh	A23	A23	A24				
Badlands	A53	A53	A54				
Batman	M3	M3					M1
Batman: The Caped Crusader	M13	M13	M12				
Batman: The Movie	M19	M19	M18				
Bubble Bobble	A30	A30	A31				
Cabal	A33	A33	A34				
Castle Master	A49	A49	A50				
Chase HQ	A35	A35	A36				
Cobra	M2	M2	M2				
Combat School	A8	A8	A8				
Crazy Cars	A3	A3	A3				
Cyberball	A50	A50	A51				
Daley Thompson's Decathlon	S1	S1	S1				
Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge	S14	S14	S13				
Daley Thompson's Supertest	S11	S11	S10				
Darkman	M29	M29	M28				
Dragon Ninja	A25	A25	A26				
Dragon Spirit	A36	A36	A37				
Driller	A22	A22	A23				
Empire Strikes Back, The	M11	M11	M10				
Enduro Racer	A1	A1	A1				
Escape from Planet of the Robot Monsters	A47	A47	A48				
Fun School 2 (under 6s)	*	*	*				
Fun School 2 (6-8 year olds)	*	*	*				
Fun School 2 (over 8s)	*	*	*				
Ghostbusters II	M20	M20	M19				
Great Escape, The	M6	M6	M5				
Green Beret	A2	A2	A2	A1	A1	A1	
Gryzor	A24	A24	A25				
Hard Drivin'	A40	A40	A41				
Head Over Heels	A12	A12	A12		A3		
Hook			M30				
Hudson Hawk	M26	M26	M25				
Hyper Sports	S5	S5	S5	S2			
International Karate+	S8	S8	S8				
Jack Niklaus' Golf			S19				
Klax	A51	A51	A52				
Konami's Ping Pong	S6	S6	S6				
Konami's Tennis	S3						
Last Ninja 2	S17	S17	S16				
Lethal Weapon			M31				
Match Day	S10	S10					
Match Day II	S13	S13	S12				
Match Point		S3	S3				
Miami Vice	M7	M7	M7				
Midnight Resistance	A42	A42	A43				
Mikie	A13	A13	A14				
NARC	A52	A52	A53				
Navy Moves	A43	A43	A44				
Nemesis	A15	A15	A16				
New Zealand Story, The	A32	A32	A33				
Nightbreed	M24	M24	M23				
Operation Thunderbolt	A37	A37	A38				



LIST

8-bit formats. How many have you got?

	Spectrum	Amstrad	C64	BBC	Atari 800	
Operation Wolf	A20	A20	A21			
Parallax			A9			
Pictionary	*	*	*			
Pit-Fighter	A56	A56	A57			
Platoon	M9	M9	M8			
Power Drift	A39	A39	A40			
Predator	M8	M8	M7			
Pro Tennis Tour	S19	S19	S18			
Puffy's Saga	A44	A44	A45			
Puzznic	A46	A46	A47			
Quartet	A9	A9	A10			
Rainbow Islands	A41	A41	A42			
Rambo	M1	M1	M1			
Rambo III	M14	M14	M13			
Rampage	A5	A5	A5			
Rastan	A17	A17	A18			
RBI 2 Baseball	S20	S20	S21			
Real Ghostbusters, The	M15	M15	M14			
Red Heat	M18	M18	M17			
Renegade	A6	A6	A6			
Renegade III	A31	A31	A32			
Return of the Jedi, The	M12	M12	M11			
RoboCop	M22	M22	M21			
R-Type	A18	A18	A19			
Run the Gauntlet	S15	S15	S14			
Salamander	A16	A16	A17			
SDI	A26	A26	A27			
Shadow Warriors	A45	A45	A46			
Shao-Lin's Road	S12	S12	S11			
Short Circuit	M5	M5	M4			
Simpsons, The	M28	M28	M27			
Skate Wars	S18	S18	S17			
Skull & Crossbones	A59	A58	A60			
Slap Fight	A11	A11	A12			
Sly Spy	A48	A48	A49			
Smash TV	A55	A55	A56			
Space Gun	A57		A58			
Spitting Image	M16	M16	M15			
Star Wars	M10	M10	M9			
STUN Runner	A54	A54	A55			
Super Hang-On	S9	S9	S9			
Super Space Invaders	A58	A57	A59			
Super Sprint	S7	S7	S7			
Target Renegade	A19	A19	A20			
Terminator 2	M27	M27	M26			
Test Drive 2: The Duel			S20			
Toobin'	A34	A34	A35			
Top Gun	M4	M4	M3			
Total Recall	M25	M25	M24			
Trivial Pursuit	*	*	*			
Untouchables, The	M21	M21	M20			
Vindicator, The	A14	A14	A15			
Vindicators	A28	A28	A29			
WEC Le Mans	S16	S16	S15			
Wizball	A4	A4	A4			
Wonder Boy	A10	A10	A11			
World Series Baseball	S4	S4	S4			
WWF European Rampage Tour			S23			
WWF WrestleMania	S21	S21	S22			
Xybots	A27	A27	A28			
Yie Ar Kung-Fu	S2	S2	S2	S1		S1

***Key:** A = Arcade Collection, M = Movie Collection, S = Sports Collection, * Title released for this format but with no spine number.*







CLASSIC MOMENTS

Double Dragon

» **PLATFORM:** ARCADE » **DEVELOPER:** TECHNOS » **RELEASED:** 1987

The last time you made it to the final boss of *Double Dragon*, you came up short – you had no idea that Machine Gun Willy was so deadly, and you ran out of coins. This time, you've come prepared. With a friend and quite a chunk of change in tow, you smash your way through to the final stage once again and this time, you manage defeat the fiendish villain. What a triumph of teamwork!

But the game isn't over, as the text flashes up on screen: "Let's Fight – 1 Player vs 2 Player." You look over at your friend, and look back at the screen. Both of you make a dash towards the baseball bat, and you get there first – but as you stoop to pick up the weapon, your friend unleashes a flurry of punches that knocks you off your feet and frees him to grab the advantage. With the reach advantage, Jimmy quickly smashes Billy's pixellated teeth out and claims Marian for himself. So much for brotherly love… *

BIO

Having already evolved the beat-'em-up once with *Renegade*, Technos went back to the well with *Double Dragon* and came out with an even bigger hit. Following the quest of twin brothers Billy and Jimmy Lee, who were out to rescue Billy's girlfriend Marian, the game became a massive hit and kicked off a major multimedia franchise. As well as two arcade sequels, countless home conversions and various spin-off games, *Double Dragon* spawned a comic series, a line of toys, a cartoon and even a live action film starring the former T-1000, Robert Patrick, as the villainous Koga Shuko.



MORE CLASSIC DOUBLE DRAGON MOMENTS

Oh No Abobo!



So far, your trip down the violent streets of *Double Dragon* hasn't thrown you any major surprises – some thugs here, a whip-wielding lady out of the door over there. As a result, you're completely unprepared for the appearance of the next enemy to emerge from the building. The enormous Abobo doesn't bother with the door and instead comes crashing through the wall!

It's Mine Now



It's not fair when an enemy rushes you with a weapon, if all you have to rely on is two fists, two feet and a solid chunk of martial arts training. Luckily, your enemies can drop their weapons – and you can pick them right up off the floor. The odds don't seem quite so unfair with a baseball bat in hand…

A Right Belter



Conveyor belts are always dangerous in videogames, and the one at the end of the second level in *Double Dragon* is no different. If you can knock an enemy onto it, the conveyor belt will slowly drag them into the machinery – and thus, their demise. Just don't be tempted to hop on the infernal thing yourself, as it's equally deadly to you.

Hostile Terrain



You've successfully made your way to the lair of the Black Warriors, where Marian is being held captive. It looks like you might be in for an easy time as there are no guards to be found, but you're being naive. As you try to make your way forward, the wall itself shifts to smack you. Good luck, Lee Twins!

The Story of Thor

While the SNES was the home of the RPG, that didn't stop excellent adventures taking place elsewhere. Luke Albigés returns to the Mega Drive classic that went beyond Oasis

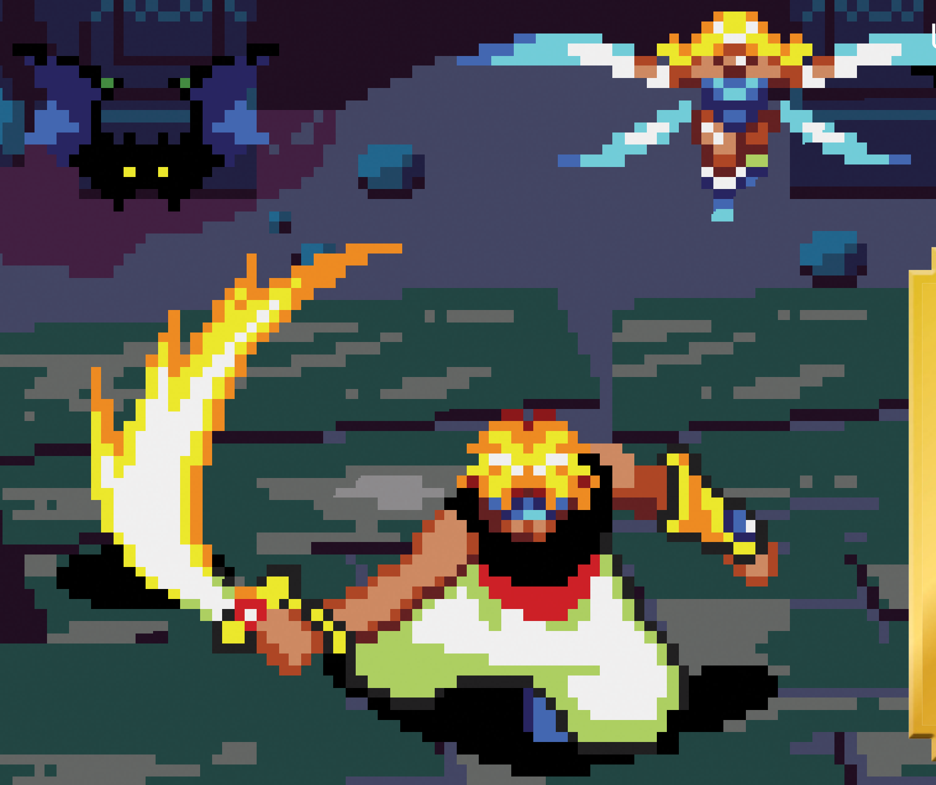


It's often the case that a game's title tells you literally everything you need to know about it. Nobody has ever had to ask what *Virtua Racing* is about, nor has there been any confusion about what happens (and where) in *Street Fighter.* At the other end of the spectrum are those abstract titles that make the element of mystery work for them, games like *Herzog Zwei*, *ActRaiser* or *Rez* giving little away through their monikers. Most games can be placed somewhere between these two extremes, with Ancient's *Beyond Oasis* falling closer to the cryptic end, although there's an even greater mystery to the game's title than it first seems – why is it called *The Story Of Thor* outside of the US when that's literally not what the game is?



» [Mega Drive] The intro sequence is somewhat vague, but that helps the game's air of mystery and adventure.

That, it turns out, is a simple case of the original meaning being lost in translation. In the Japanese game – and in the recent fan retranslation – Thor is the alien world from where the two powerful armlets of the plot and their original owners originated, although not so much as a reference to this exists in the localised edition. No, this is not the story of Thor, rather that of Ali, prince of the land of Oasis who happens upon a relic with the power to summon and control spirits – a power which must be used to stop the bearer of the armlet's chaotic counterpart.



BUT IS IT AN RPG?

Just like the *Zelda* series, there's some debate over whether or not *The Story Of Thor* actually falls under the RPG umbrella. Unlike the Nintendo series, there is actually a stats screen and a character level in the Rank system (which, interestingly, is progressed by killing enemies at low health rather than a traditional experience mechanic), so there's a stronger case to be made for this game for sure. Ultimately, it's a semantic argument anyway – whether or not you consider it to be an RPG doesn't change the fact that it's one of the Mega Drive's most underrated gems.

> "There's an incredible degree of depth to the combat in The Story Of Thor that simply doesn't exist in the majority of action-RPGs"

While a cursory glance might suggest the game to be a belated answer to Nintendo's sublime *A Link To The Past*, there's actually an incredible degree of depth to the combat in *The Story Of Thor* that simply doesn't exist in the majority of action-RPGs. Just as it helped to do with *Streets Of Rage II*, Ancient threw special moves and powerful secret attacks into the game to make fights more strategic and engaging – Ali has an answer for almost everything once you master the intricacies of his trusty knife, with dashing swipes to knock down enemies, rapid flurries to deal decent damage to single targets and acrobatic flips to avoid blows while landing your own. While you *can* basically mash your way through the game, taking the time to really learn the combat system is what elevates this from a good game to a great one and to this day, there are few better examples of freeform, fighting game-style action in the genre.

It's not all about that knife, either. Ali can find and use swords, crossbows and bombs as well, each with their own strategic benefits – swords give a power and range boost over the default blade while restricting move set and mobility a little, bows tend to be weaker but allow you to engage targets from a safe distance while bombs present a powerful, but risky, option which can also help out in puzzle-solving from time to time. With the exception of the starting knife and certain rare special weapons (often rewards for finding and beating hidden side quests), each has a finite amount of uses so bows and bombs ▶



» [Mega Drive] Mastering Ali's various secret techniques is crucial for getting through the game quickly and efficiently.



» [Mega Drive] Returning to the castle is an effective method of healing, as supplies aren't always as readily available as you might like.

LAY OF THE LAND

The various sights you won't want to miss as you explore the beautiful world of Oasis





> “Switching between weapons is a bit of a chore on a regular controller but six-button users have it far easier”

have ammo limits while swords have a durability value that decreases every time a blow is landed. This results in some interesting inventory management as there are only seven free slots to play with and given that bows and bombs sometimes come into play outside of combat, the remaining space needs to be split between weapons for regular use and the powerful gear you'll fall back on when it's boss time. Switching between weapons is a bit of a chore on a regular controller but six-button users have it far easier – as well as a shortcut button to go straight to the weapon menu, there's also a little-documented on-the-fly weapon change command for maximum efficiency.



» [Mega Drive] Anyone who has played the game will know how annoying the wind in this section can be…

Each of the four spirits that you recruit over the course of the game can also help out in combat, with varying degrees of involvement and usefulness. Dytto's healing and freezing abilities make her well-suited for novices expecting to eat a few blows, while Efreet's blazing rampage lays waste to mobs without you even needing to lift a finger. Shade, meanwhile, is all about avoiding and limiting incoming damage – a shadowy shield of sorts, if you will – while Bow is sadly the least useful of the bunch, although there are a few areas in the game where dropping a giant man-eating plant in the right spot can make a world of difference. While all four are used in battle, it's fair to say that isn't their primary purpose. Each has abilities that can be used to reach new areas on the open map, not unlike in a *Zelda* or *Metroid* game – fires can be extinguished with Dytto's bubble, Shade drags you across certain gaps and Bow is able to chew through some barriers, all furthering your progress. Efreet is the odd exception here as while his flames can be used to light torches and shatter crystals, fire-based weapons and bombs can serve the same purpose and as such, it's entirely possible to complete the game without even recruiting him.

The way in which these elementals are summoned is perhaps the most interesting thing about them and while limiting, the system forms the backbone of the



» [Mega Drive] Each spirit is summoned from a cube, which feels a little at odds with their mystical nature.

SPIRITED AWAY

A closer look at the four different phantom companions



WATER SPIRIT 'DYTTO'

■ As the first spirit you get, Dytto's abilities are kept relatively simple. While primarily used for support, she does also have a couple of defensive options.

MAGIC BUBBLE: Tap A. Release a slow-moving bubble from Dytto's location, briefly stunning enemies or dousing small fires.

HEALING: Double-tap A. Restores a chunk of Ali's health, effectively trading SP for HP. Sometimes used automatically when critically low on health.

MAGIC STORM: Hold A. A swirling twister that knocks foes down, useful for creating a little breathing room when greatly outnumbered.



FIRE SPIRIT 'EFREET'

■ The most aggressive ally, Efreet roams and attacks enemies of his own volition, although he also has a range of powerful special attacks that can be triggered at will.

FLAME BREATH: Tap A. Efreet spews a potent stream of fire, perfect for incinerating foes grouped up in narrow spaces.

FIREBALL: Double-tap A. A quick dash in the direction Ali is facing, great at interrupting incoming attacks or closing distance between foes.

MELT BOMBER: Hold A. An eight-directional nuke that makes short work of most crowds. Costs a lot of SP and grows weaker the less you have, so use sparingly.



SHADOW SPIRIT 'SHADE'

■ If you'd rather play safe, Shade is your guy. While active, he acts as a doppelganger, mitigating damage from attacks and saving Ali from falls.

DARK CLAW: Tap A. A shadowy grasp that extends from Ali's location. Primarily used to cross gaps by grabbing poles or to retrieve distant items.

DOPPELGANGER: Hold A. Become one with the shadows to scout areas. While you can't interact with anything in this form, you're also completely immune to damage.



PLANT SPIRIT 'BOW'

■ What this carnivorous plant lacks in mobility, it makes up in its unrivalled area control. Place it in the right spot and watch your enemies fall!

BITE ATTACK: Tap A. While Bow automatically lashes out at nearby foes, you can also trigger more aggressive continual attacks manually.

MOVE UNDERGROUND: Double-tap A. Command Bow to burrow into the ground and re-emerge at Ali's location. Quite slow, so knowing when to relocate is key.

POISON POLLEN: Hold A. This explosive special move sees Bow burst in a shower of spores, stunning all enemies on the screen for a little while.

> "There are even some Streets Of Rage effects tucked away in the sound test option, and that rabbit hole of leftovers runs even deeper"

▶ game's dungeons. The A button is used to fire a ball of light from the Gold Armlet, calling forth the relevant minion when it makes contact with certain materials or elements. Launch it into a lake and Dytto will fly to your side, or blast a sconce to have Efreet join you – at its most basic level, it's about having the right companion for the right job, switching between them as needs and resources dictate and allow to get through each trial. It's not always quite so obvious, however. Experiment and you'll find this system isn't as limited as it first appears – inconspicuous drips in a cave corner may let you summon Dytto, Efreet can be called forth by firing your orb into a bomb blast and each of the spirits can be unleashed by hitting the elemental gems used to power them up. As with the combat, it's this extra depth over what appears to be a relatively simple puzzle mechanic that truly impresses – even those who have finished the game likely still haven't found the optimal route.

It's important that *The Story Of Thor* has this kind of replayability going for it, as it's not exactly an epic quest, like you might find in the likes of *Final Fantasy*. A first casual play typically comes in between six and eight hours total, with top players able to clear the game in well under an hour. While there are no extra modes or difficulties to try, there's still plenty you can do to challenge yourself – collecting no Hearts means you'll never level up for a more difficult experience,



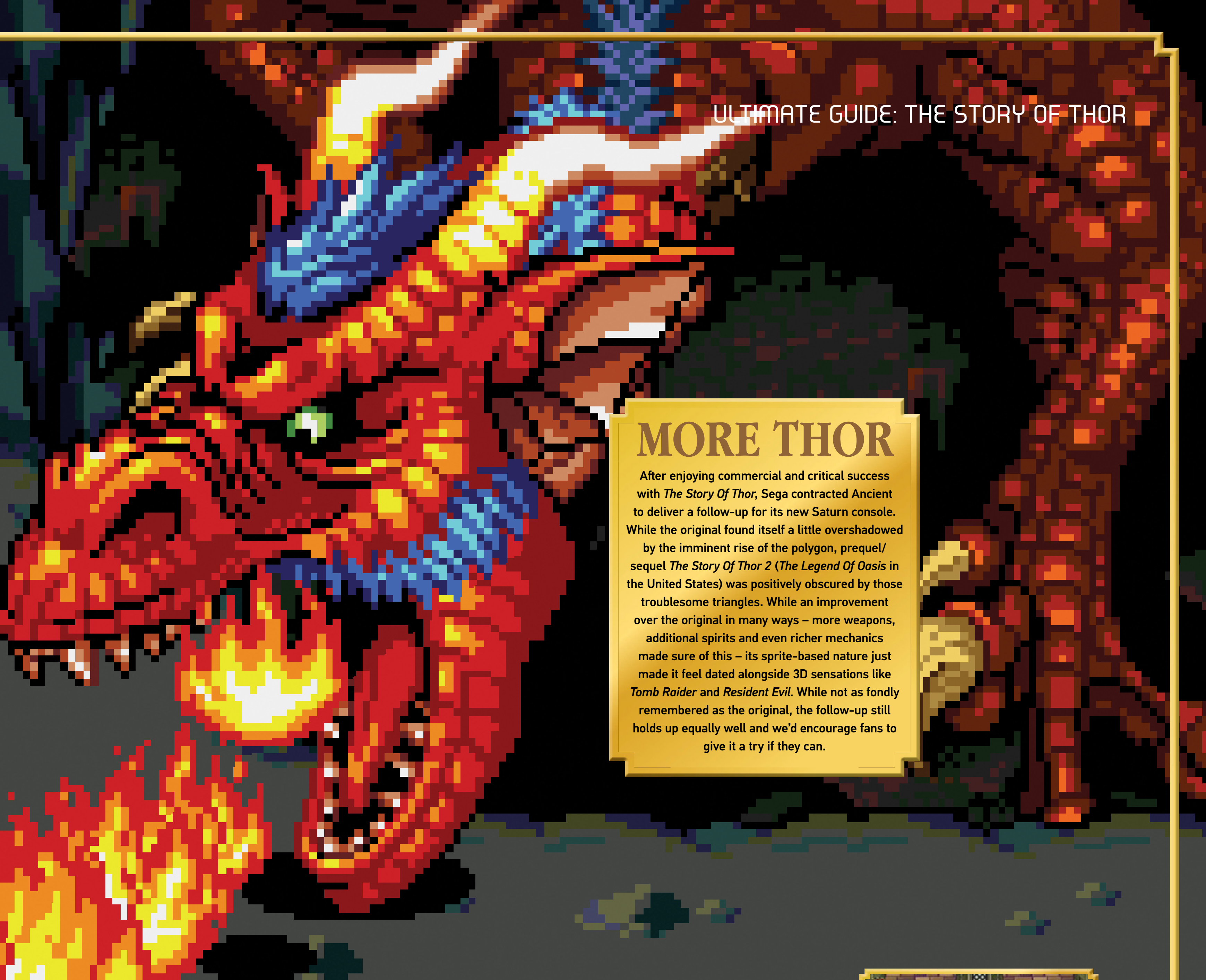
» [Mega Drive] Just your average wise old man on a mountaintop. Move along, nothing to see here.



» [Mega Drive] We're not sure what these tentacled things are meant to be, but they're pretty annoying.







MORE THOR

After enjoying commercial and critical success with *The Story Of Thor*, Sega contracted Ancient to deliver a follow-up for its new Saturn console. While the original found itself a little overshadowed by the imminent rise of the polygon, prequel/sequel *The Story Of Thor 2* (*The Legend Of Oasis* in the United States) was positively obscured by those troublesome triangles. While an improvement over the original in many ways – more weapons, additional spirits and even richer mechanics made sure of this – its sprite-based nature just made it feel dated alongside 3D sensations like *Tomb Raider* and *Resident Evil*. While not as fondly remembered as the original, the follow-up still holds up equally well and we'd encourage fans to give it a try if they can.

for instance, while tackling puzzles and areas in different manners or orders and aiming to find and unlock the five infinite-use weapons is no small feat either. The freedom of combat and this relative brevity mean that the game is just as much fun to replay as the likes of *Streets Of Rage*, and realistically not all that much longer once you have your route down.



» [Mega Drive] Dungeons all look fairly dark and similar, although the overworld is much more colourful.

Actually, the game has more in common with *Streets Of Rage* than just combat complexity and replayability. In fact, it was made by some of the same team and scored by the legendary Yuzo Koshiro, although the eclectic soundtrack is far from his best work. When it works, it *really* works – some of the rousing orchestral themes are absolutely majestic – but in many places, it just sounds a bit of a mess. Whether accidentally left placeholders or an intentionally hidden Easter egg, there are even some *Streets Of Rage* effects tucked away in the sound test option, but that rabbit hole of leftovers runs even deeper – *Soleil* (*Crusader Of Centy* in the US), which released the following year from a different studio, has the same sound test menu buried in its code, and even features Ali's sprite. How they got there and why remains a mystery, but one that can most likely be put down to these being leftover placeholders that were never expected to be discovered.

Visually stunning it may be (sprite work and animation is some of the best on the Mega Drive) but timing is everything and in this case, the imminent 3D revolution of the 32-bit era meant that *The Story Of Thor* didn't get the recognition it deserved at the time – between that, the naming issue, the underwhelming performance of the Saturn sequel and Sega's well-documented loathing of money, it's unlikely that the series will ever be resurrected. There are plenty of options for playing it today however, from its appearance on compilations like *Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection* to being available on Steam, so there's no excuse for having not played this counter-shot against Nintendo's RPG dominance – it's a genuine treasure and should be treated as such. *



» [Mega Drive] There are tutorial books hidden in the back of the castle, but the wording in them is rather poor.



» [Mega Drive] Bosses are a clear highlight, with some so large that they don't even fit on the screen.

THE TEX MURPHY SERIES

FMV games have garnered a poor reputation for bad acting and mediocre gameplay. Tex Murphy stands out as showcasing a great mix of adventuring with FMV. Kim Wild tracks down Aaron Conners to talk about everyone's favourite PI

When it comes to adventure games there are many characters that stand out for different reasons as being memorable for players. Tex Murphy is one of these beloved protagonists, with his quick-witted sense of humour, dishevelled appearance and sharp observation skills. The *Tex Murphy* series still stands out as being the pinnacle of the FMV genre and stands the test of time today. Creator Aaron Conners feels that the character is much loved and contributes to the games' appeal. "Tex is a endearing character. But the games also had lots of humour and good stories, which have universal appeal, no matter if we're talking about movies, TV, books or videogames," he tells us.

Did Aaron Conners ever feel that FMV games were the future? "I don't know if we thought it was the *future*, but we thought it would continue to be a valid option. Unfortunately, I think there were so many poorly-produced FMV games that people started to blame the FMV! Basically, that's like saying my green car doesn't run well, so I need to get a different-coloured car. I'm happy to see a few new games, such as *Mystery Case Files: Dire Grove*, using FMV (and doing it well). I would love to bring it back."

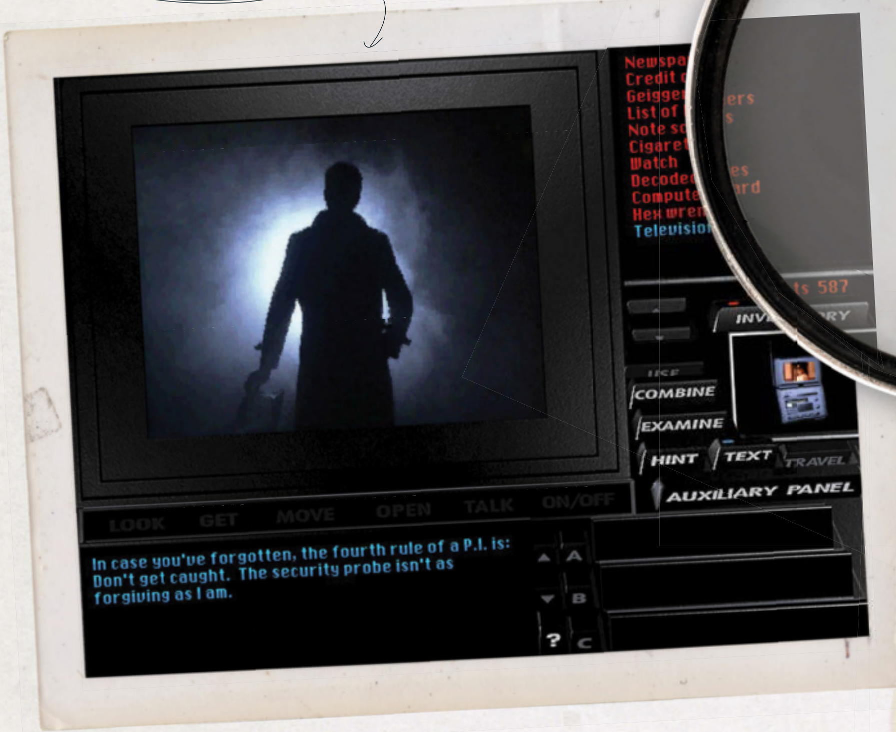
Tex started out with humble beginnings in the point-and-click adventure *Mean Streets* which would see the detective take on a beautiful woman's case of her father's apparent suicide. However, the game didn't begin life as an adventure title. "*Mean Streets* started out as just a flight simulator. We decided that it was a bit boring, so we added a story to give you a reason to be flying around," Aaron explains. "We set it in the future because we loved science fiction, especially *Blade Runner*."

Tex would venture into the sequel *Martian Memorandum*, the first game in the series to use FMV although these would be very basic in nature due to being on floppy disk. Of course, FMV games require actors and *Tex Murphy* was no exception. In order to accomplish this, the team approached each game much like a movie. "We've preferred FMV to CG characters because we're film buffs and we love blending movie elements with games. Also, there's no way for CG characters to portray emotion better than live actors," says Aaron. "We handled it like a movie and had a casting director. She read the character descriptions and found actors that would be well-suited to the roles. We also didn't want to spend a fortune, so we all got a chance to play some parts, too."



» [PC] The ever-helpful Vanessa is the port of call for addresses and background information for places and clients.

» [PC] Remember to save regularly in case you happen to meet your untimely end.



> "Going from floppy disks to CD was huge and, at first, we were thinking one disc would be plenty. Wrong!"
> **Aaron Conners**

When it came to developing *Under A Killing Moon*, it was a huge undertaking making the jump from floppy disk to the CD format and was more difficult than anticipated, with the final game taking up four CDs. "Going from floppy disks to CD was huge and, at first, we were thinking one disc would be plenty. Wrong! It was just the sheer size of the graphics and the FMV," Aaron recalls. "All the components of the game were in separate files and we spent a lot of time trying to organise them in a way that would minimise disc-swapping (something that's no longer an issue, thank god). We hated getting criticised for it, but there was no way around it."

The Virtual World Engine, created for use in *Under A Killing Moon* and later incorporated into *Pandora Directive* and *Overseer*, combined the use of the keyboard and mouse to move around the locations and interact with items and the characters. It was a unique interface not without its problems but proved incredibly immersive for gamers. The idea came from observing titles such as *7th Guest* and *Wolfenstein 3D*. "We had some very talented programmers and we asked them to create an engine that would look as good as *7th Guest*'s graphics, but would be fully 3D, like *Wolfenstein*," says Aaron. "There was a lot of trial and error. No one had created a fully-3D engine for an adventure game, so we had to integrate user interface for conversation, searching, and puzzle-solving in addition to the inventory and movement that shooters like *Wolfenstein* and *Doom* were already using."

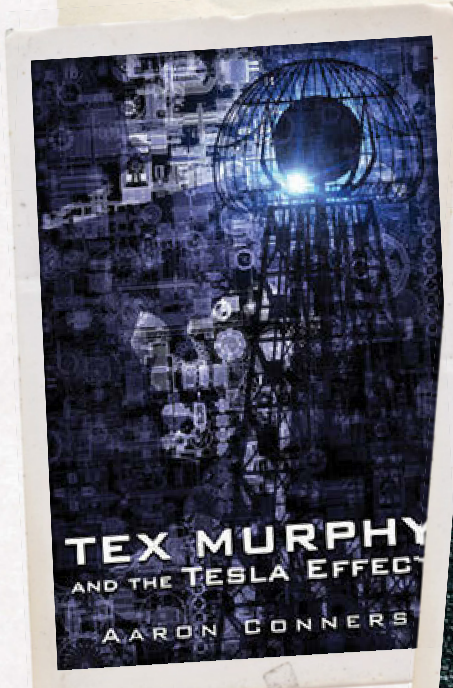
With *Under A Killing Moon* being the first fully-3D FMV title that the team worked on, it took three years to develop and got expensive very quickly. "I'm guessing we spent about $5,000,000," recalls Aaron." Our budgets actually were somewhat smaller for the sequels because we produced them in half the time, using essentially the same engine."

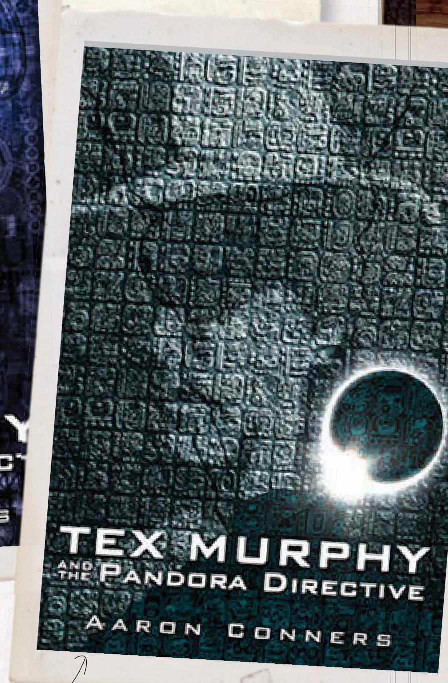
The Pandora Directive followed *Under A Killing Moon* and is considered by many fans as the highlight of the series due to its more sophisticated acting, larger variety of puzzles and tighter storyline. There were two difficulty levels in *Pandora Directive* to cater for newcomers and more seasoned gamers. It was a decision that wasn't implemented until very late into the development process. "We didn't decide to do two difficulty levels until the game was almost finished," remembers Aaron. "As we were testing, it occurred to me that we could easily implement it

RADIO STORY

How Aaron Conners expanded the story of Tex Murphy beyond the world of videogames

Although many know about the games, few know about the *Tex Murphy* radio show and the novels that were released at the same time. The radio show was launched to address the notorious cliffhanger ending of *Overseer* and answer some of the questions that it raised. In 1994, Aaron wrote the story of *Pandora Directive* as a novel which was published in 1995, with the game being adapted from the novel. The novel for *Under a Killing Moon* was released soon afterwards. The novelisation of *Tex Murphy* and the *Tesla Effect* was released alongside the game in 2014 and was heavily based on the novel. That year would see the rerelease of the *Tex Murphy* novels with added artwork, story content, author notes and forewords by Chris Jones. Aaron Conners is currently working on new novels in the series, the first of which is entitled *Tex Murphy And The Poisoned Pawn*. The novel takes place after the end of *Tesla Effect* and will look into Tex Murphy's past. Aaron Conners also has two other *Tex Murphy* novels planned in order to finish the series. To download the radio episodes as well as find out where to purchase the novels visit aaronconners.net.





» Aaron Connors, *Tex Murphy*'s creator wrote the novelisations himself.

THE HISTORY OF TEX MURPHY

Want to play the games but don't know where to begin? Well, we're here to help



MEAN STREETS 1989

■ Tex Murphy is hired by a beautiful woman, Sylvia Linsky, in order to investigate her father's apparent suicide. Tex soon finds himself wrapped up in a case shrouded in murder, insurance money, world domination and gun battles that will test his many abilities to save the human race.



MARTIAN MEMORANDUM 1991

■ Tex is hired by Marshall Alexander, owner of the Terraform Corporation, to find his abducted daughter Alexis. It's not long before Tex learns about the Oracle Stone, a Martian artefact that has fallen into the hands of Thomas Dangerfield who is determined to reshape reality.



UNDER A KILLING MOON 1994

■ The Countess Reiner hires the recently-divorced Tex to retrieve a crystal dove statuette but it's not long before he realises that all is not as it seems. Tex uncovers a cult determined to use the statuette to bring an end to the world, no matter what the cost.



PANDORA DIRECTIVE 1996

■ Gordon Fitzpatrick recruits Tex to find missing Dr Thomas Malloy but it's not long before he discovers that the doctor was involved with the UFO crash at Roswell in 1947. With everyone searching for Malloy, including the NSA, Tex needs to crack the case first.



OVERSEER 1998

■ In this remake of *Mean Streets*, *Overseer* rewrites many of the original game's storylines and characters and sees Tex uncover a conspiracy that threatens the fate of the world. Tex retells the story of his past during a dinner date with Chelsee Bando and how he met his ex-wife Sylvia.



TESLA EFFECT 2014

■ Funded by Kickstarter, *Tesla Effect* sees Tex attacked and lose his memory of the previous seven years. Tex soon becomes embroiled in the affairs of Nikola Tesla and finds himself in a fight against the clock to protect the future by uncovering the many secrets of his past.



» [PC] Part of your role as a private investigator involves interrogating the locals for information about different topics.

TEX MURPHY 101

■ The *Tex Murphy* series sees you as a PI solving a strong variety of cases. From the apparent suicide of a client's father in *Mean Streets*, the intergalactic exploits of *Martian Memorandum*, mysterious cults in *Under a Killing Moon* to the world of UFOs at Roswell in *Pandora Directive* and uncovering your past in *Tesla Effect*, there's plenty of puzzling to behold..

▶ by adding some bonus puzzles, an extra location, more earnable points, and a timer for some of the puzzles. As I remember, it took maybe a week to implement. Our main reason for adding it was to give people another reason to replay the game. The game had the three narrative paths and we wanted people to play the game at least twice and, by having another difficulty level, we hoped it would encourage replayability."

Striking the balance between games that people wanted to play but combined FMV was something of a challenge. "I've always said that it's the toughest type of storytelling to do well. I don't believe there's a 'correct formula' – it depends on the type of game, the nature of the protagonist, and the audience the game is created for," explains Aaron. "I think players should be given just enough choice to feel engaged; too many choices (or total freedom) makes it very hard to maintain a meaningful narrative. Most importantly, story should be used a reward and never get in the way of what the player wants to do." In total it took 18 months to develop *Pandora Directive* with the team having learnt from the trials of creating *Under A Killing Moon*.

Overseer came next and was a remake of a previous game in the series, *Mean Streets*. Why did this decision come about? "After *Pandora*, we were going to do a new story called *Trance*. In fact, the notorious cliffhanger at the end of *Overseer* was intended to be the opening scene of *Trance*. However, we were offered a deal to make a game for Intel, but it had to be small and produced

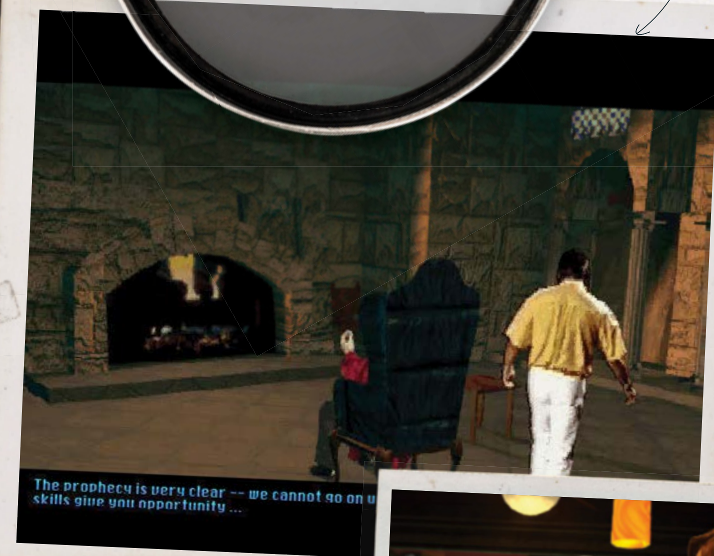
» [PC] Examining items gains you important points and can sometimes reveal important information.



» [PC] *Overseer* was a remake of *Mean Streets* where Tex takes on the case from an enigmatic Sylvia.



» [PC] *Under A Killing Moon* was received well, critically. With the likes of IGN rewarding it 9.0.



> "Mean Streets' story was pretty lame, but we took some of the elements and made a good story out of it"
> AARON CONNERS

quickly. There was no way to do *Trance* in the time they'd allocated, so we decided to do an updated version of *Mean Streets*, Tex Murphy's first case," says Aaron. "I went back and replayed *Mean Streets* and then wrote a new script. It wasn't a whole lot faster than doing a brand-new game because the *Mean Streets* story was pretty lame. But we took some of the elements and made a good story out of it."

Overseer was intended to be a DVD game but came out on CD as well. The difference between the two versions was merely a question of superior graphics. "The DVD version was part of the deal with Intel. Ultimately, the deal didn't work out as planned and we decided to release the game ourselves and it made sense to offer both versions." The game also received an overhaul in its control, combining a point-and-click interface with the ability to move around the environments. This wasn't always successful, something that Aaron admits to. "In 1998, many games were moving to 'mouse-only' UI and this was our attempt at it. In some ways, it was more intuitive, but there were some shortcomings as well."

Technical limitations of the time meant that the team couldn't include as much material as they would have liked. "I wanted to populate the world with flying speeders, pedestrians on Chandler Ave., etc.. Frame-rate was such a problem that, in *Under Killing Moon*, we only had one character moving at a time on screen!" There were many technical difficulties in developing the games over the years as the *Tex Murphy* series is renowned for pushing the boundaries of technology of the time to great effect. "The biggest issues were system specs and compatibility problems. Windows eventually standardised things, but in the early Nineties there were hundreds of sound cards, video cards, etc. – this was a constant source of problems. And we were trying to push technology in a time when RAM cost $50 per MB! A lot of people's systems couldn't play the game at a decent frame-rate."

After *Overseer* it was planned to release an additional three games in the series but they sadly never materialised. "*Trance* was the intended sequel to *The Pandora Directive*. In *Overseer*, there are lots of hints to where the story was headed: Tex had been having problems sleeping, a Fabergé exhibit coming to New San Francisco, the scene at the end. As years passed, I expanded the story to three more games, tentatively titled *Chance*, *Polarity* and *Trance*. It would be a dream come true for us to produce and release those games!"

It wouldn't be until 2014 that Tex Murphy fans would be able to revisit their favourite detective with the release of *Tesla Effect*, funded through Kickstarter. The game has continued the tradition of previous titles by having multiple endings and narrative paths to take throughout the adventure.

With technology becoming more sophisticated and graphics becoming more lifelike, the role of the FMV game has faded into the past, although some games do occasionally dip into the genre. Of all the games in the series, *Pandora Directive* remains a highlight for Aaron Conners. "I like them all but *Pandora* is definitely my favourite. I think it really was a fantastic blend of story and game. And I think it still holds up well today."

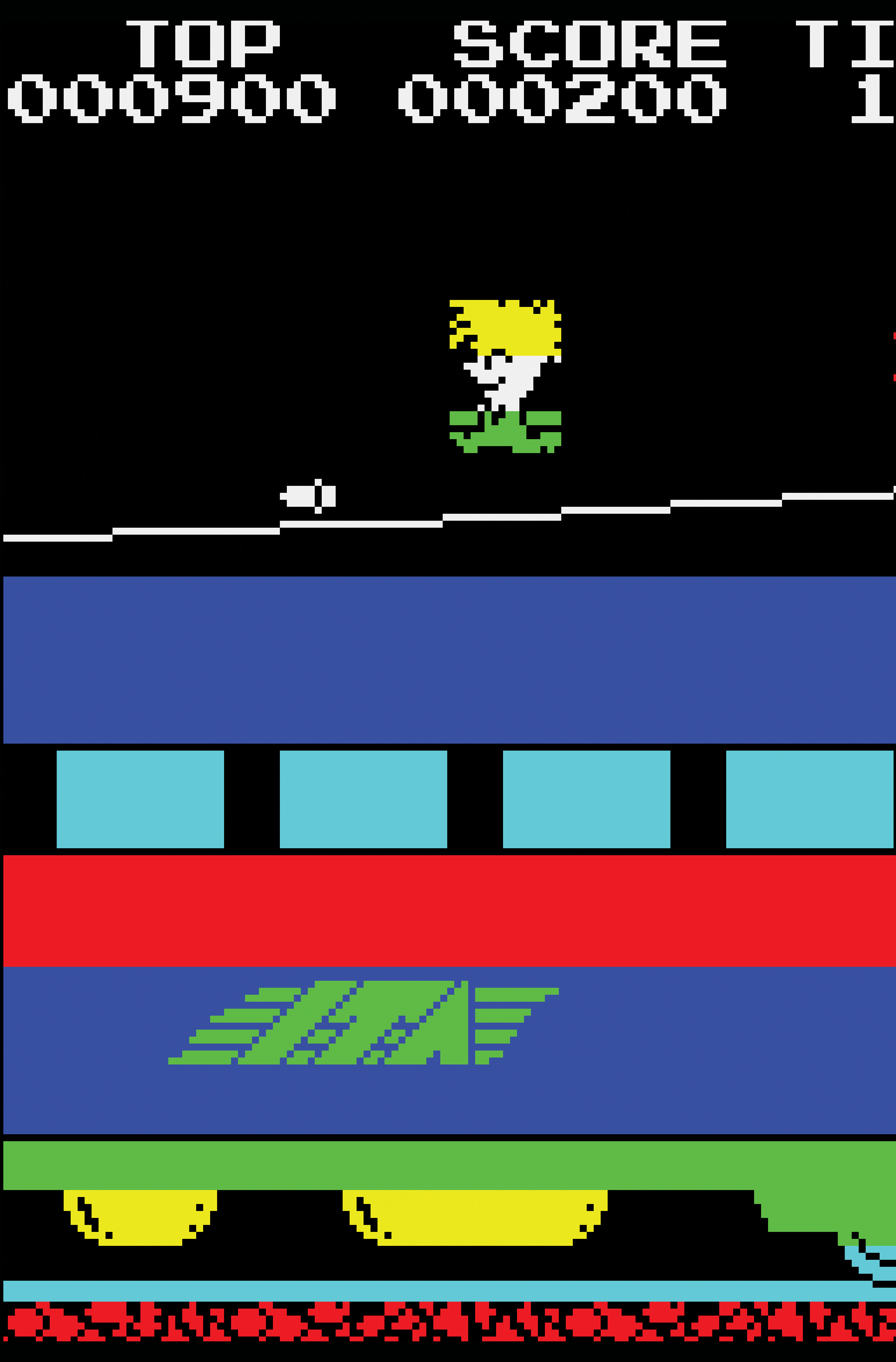
For gamers who have yet to experience *Tex Murphy* games, the entire series can be purchased from GOG (gog.com), a format Aaron is a fan of. "I'm a huge fan of GOG. I think it's great they give players a chance to play these classic games. I'm amazed at how quickly people forget; games come out every day that borrow heavily from older games and players have no idea." *

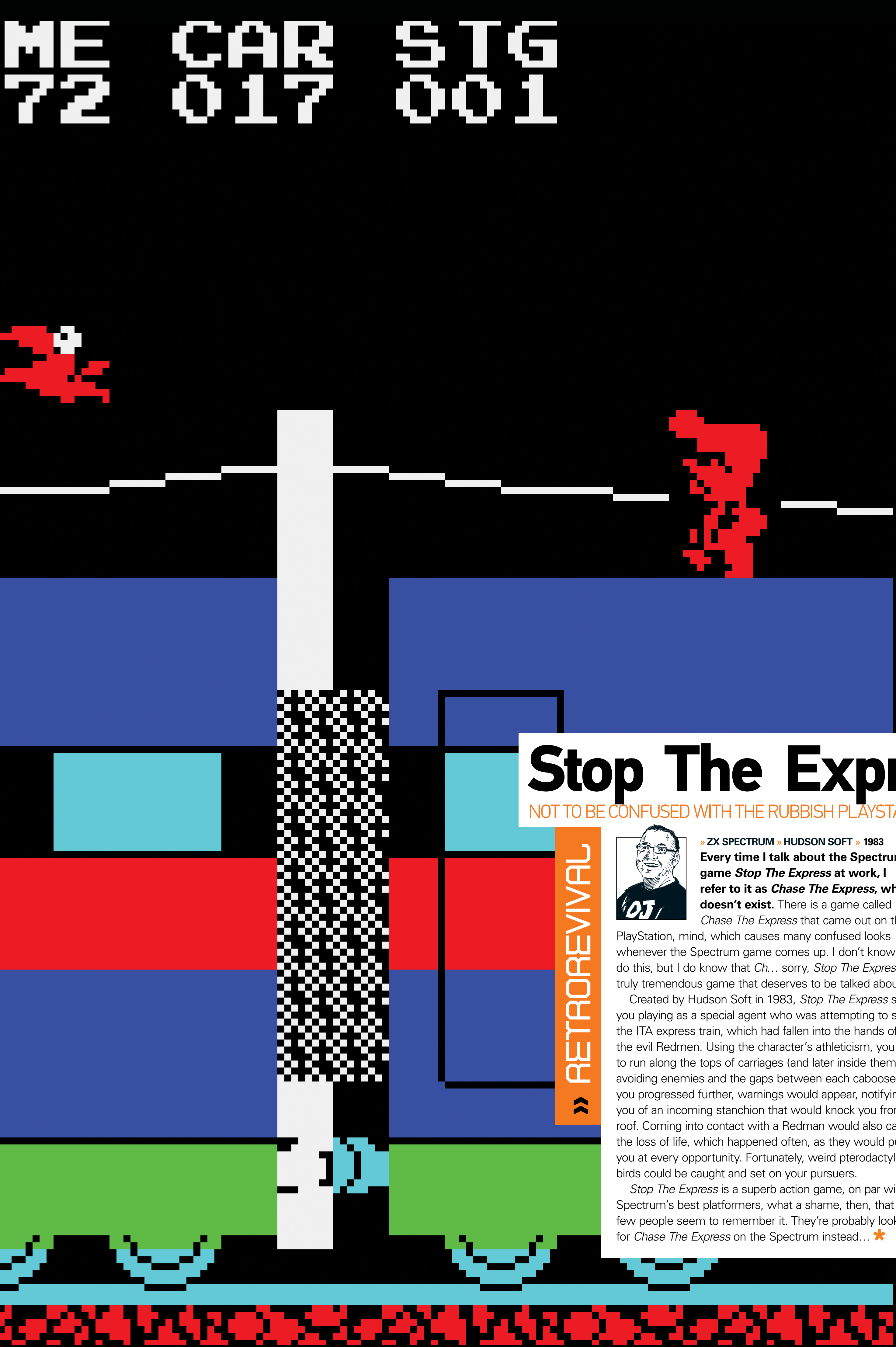


» [PC] Tex's new adventure, *Tesla Effect*, was funded on Kickstarter. It takes place seven years after the cliffhanger in *Overseer*.



» [PC] The interface for *Overseer* was overhauled to take on a point-and-click style that was common in other adventure titles.


TOP
000900
SCORE
000200



Stop The Express

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE RUBBISH PLAYSTATION GAME

» RETROREVIVAL

» ZX SPECTRUM » HUDSON SOFT » 1983

Every time I talk about the Spectrum game *Stop The Express* at work, I refer to it as *Chase The Express*, which doesn't exist. There is a game called *Chase The Express* that came out on the PlayStation, mind, which causes many confused looks whenever the Spectrum game comes up. I don't know why I do this, but I do know that *Ch…* sorry, *Stop The Express* is a truly tremendous game that deserves to be talked about.

Created by Hudson Soft in 1983, *Stop The Express* saw you playing as a special agent who was attempting to stop the ITA express train, which had fallen into the hands of the evil Redmen. Using the character's athleticism, you had to run along the tops of carriages (and later inside them), avoiding enemies and the gaps between each caboose. As you progressed further, warnings would appear, notifying you of an incoming stanchion that would knock you from the roof. Coming into contact with a Redman would also cause the loss of life, which happened often, as they would pursue you at every opportunity. Fortunately, weird pterodactyl-like birds could be caught and set on your pursuers.

Stop The Express is a superb action game, on par with the Spectrum's best platformers, what a shame, then, that so few people seem to remember it. They're probably looking for *Chase The Express* on the Spectrum instead… *

Minority Report

INTERESTING GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED



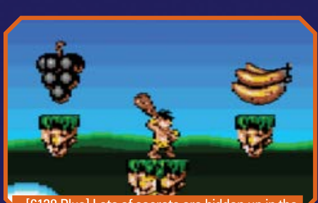
AMSTRAD 6128 PLUS

Released alongside Amstrad's famous flop, the GX4000, was the 6128 Plus home computer with 4,096 colours, hardware scrolling and sprites. YouTuber Al 'Xyphoe' White celebrates the system's 25th birthday with some hidden gems

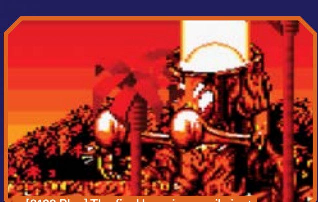




» [6128 Plus] Rik comes face to face with a huge gorilla boss on level three. Teach him a lesson for stealing all the food from the village!



» [6128 Plus] Lots of secrets are hidden up in the clouds. The ravenous Rik is excited to find such large fruits for the taking.



» [6128 Plus] The final boss is an evil giant tree that likes pummelling the ground with its giant fists and sending the snakes out for a bite!

PREHISTORIK 2: BACK TO HUNGERLAND

■ DEVELOPER: **TITUS SOFTWARE** ■ YEAR: **1993**

■ What is it about the early Nineties and cavemen in videogames? We had *Chuck Rock*, *Bonk* and even *Joe & Mac* engaged in some neanderthal ninja antics. We had pixelated Palaeolithic sprites everywhere in the arcades as well as consoles and home computers. Arguably, the least well known of these troglodytes was Rik, who featured in Titus Software's *Prehistorik*. It was generally agreed that most versions of the game looked nice across the systems it released on, but that was it. *Prehistorik* was just another bog-standard platformer that was nothing to go crazy about. Nobody expected a sequel, least of all one that would come out for the under-appreciated Amstrad 6128 Plus.

Rik returned in *Prehistorik 2: Back To Hungerland* and he brought his ravenous hunger with him! A nasty giant gorilla has raided the village's food and it's time to return to Hungerland in order to help Rik gather supplies for dinner, bash dinosaurs with his club and give that cheeky monkey what for. Journey through the mountains, up to the clouds, down into the caves and finally a rival village in the tree tops. However, he's not expecting an evil giant tree, dripping with green goo and huge branches for arms (that can pummel foolish cavemen into the ground) lying in wait to stop him from returning home!

The game rewards exploration, with lots of secrets to be found within hidden caves, up in the sky and giant rocks that warp similarly to the pipes in *Super Mario*. Rik can bounce off the heads of beasties to reach new heights and swoop around with the hang-glider to find otherwise inaccessible areas. It sounds like fairly standard run-of-the-mill platforming fare, but like its predecessor, where this game excels is in the presentation. Whilst it works fine on a normal Amstrad CPC, fire it up on the 6128 Plus and you're greeted with a stunning new title screen with digitised music via the machine's new DMA chip. The in-game graphics have been recoloured from the impressive Plus palette, and even parallax scrolling with palm trees and drifting clouds has been added using the newly-available hardware sprites. The game takes on a whole new life and, for an 8-bit game, it looks stunning. From the sprites and animation, to the fading sky line and even the little touches like the bushes

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

JOE & MAC
ARCADE



■ More caveman fun in Data East's coin-op, this time you can have two players helping or hindering each other in this short but, action-packed, romp. *Caveman Ninja*, to use its alternative title, is less about the platforming and more about the smashing of dinosaurs with various rocks and weapons.

CHUCK ROCK
AMIGA



■ If you still crave more prehistoric pleasure but with slapstick cartoon humour and a puzzle twist then poor old Chuck (whose beloved has been kidnapped) is your man. The game seems to be spoofing the 'lad culture' of the Nineties with the primitive Chuck's vulgar behaviour, grunts and 'beer belly' attack.

SUPER CAULDRON
AMSTRAD CPC



■ If you want more from Elmar Krieger, you'd be wise to check out the third game in the *Cauldron* series which he coded around the same time as *Prehistorik 2*. More platforming fun, but this time with a cute little witch. No Plus features were used, however it still looks spectacular on the humble CPC.

swaying in the breeze – you won't see a nicer-looking Amstrad game. We can even forgive the occasional slowdown when too much is happening on the screen, or the fact that the music restarts every time you enter an area. It doesn't matter when it looks as nice and plays as smoothly as this.

All this was made possible by ace Austrian coder Elmar Krieger, a veteran of the demo and public domain scene who knew how to get the best out of the Amstrad. Here, he has used all of his talents and everything he has learned about the Plus to create the gorgeous product that is *Prehistorik 2*. It looks and plays like a 16-bit game, such is the testament to just how good the 6128 Plus was. It was clear that *Prehistorik 2* was no dinosaur!

IN DEPTH



THE BONE COLLECTOR
■ One heart is restored if Rik gathers up the bones of the vanquished beast who attacked him last. You start with four lives but there's no continues, so be careful!

A VIEW TO A KILL
■ Lovely blue skies, clouds and palm trees make Hungerland a pretty place to visit. The game uses a hardware sprite trick to give a parallax scrolling effect.

RIK GOES CLUBBING
■ Here's our hungry hero swinging his club, he's just sent that teddy bear flying over to the left of the screen! The club can be upgraded to a giant mallet or flying axe.

LIGHTS OUT IN HUNGERLAND
■ If Rik mistakenly collects this icon, the sun sets and the land is plunged into darkness in a neat effect. Fumble around quickly to get the sun-up icon, it's not safe at night.

Minority Report

FLUFF

■ PUBLISHER: **RADICAL SOFTWARE** ■ YEAR: **1994**

■ "The Amstrad's answer to Sonic!' declared *Amstrad Action* magazine when writing about *Fluff* in its April 1994 issue. Strong words, clearly written to drum up interest in a declining magazine and machine userbase. It was an unfair and unwise comparison, there's no way an ageing 8-bit machine could compete with Sega's 'Blast Processing'! *Fluff* instead should be taken as a cute and fun platformer in its own right that plays nothing like *Sonic* or *Mario*, but is still very much worth the time to be checked out.

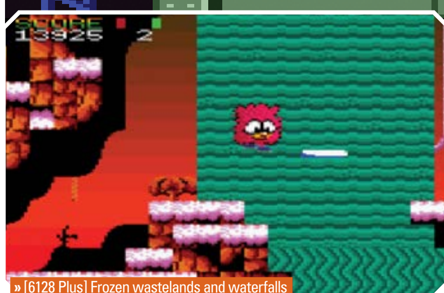
Programmed by Rob Buckley and released via his own company, Radical Software, *Fluff* was arguably the last 'big' game released on Amstrad's 8-bit range of computers and it was a lovely send off. You control the incredibly cute pink Fluff, bouncing around levels trying to rescue her even cuter Fluff babies. The usual lifts and spiked hazards await but she's armed with a *Zool*-like spinning attack, to dispatch nasties with, as well as the ability to run (after gathering momentum).

Most of the games for the 6128 Plus are just normal CPC releases with some additional features unlocked, and *Fluff* is one of only six games (we're not counting GX4000 cartridges for this article) that won't work on a normal CPC. From the ground up it's designed to use superior hardware sprites and scrolling, with graphics utilising the 4,096 colours from the palette. It's also by far the best and most impressive of the Plus-only games.

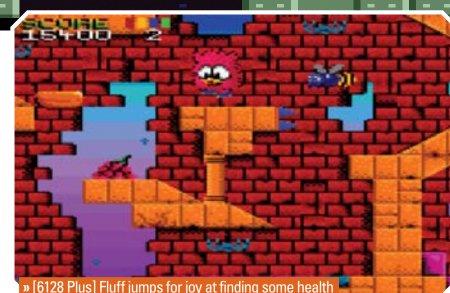
Despite some unfortunate bugs, graphical glitches and some questionable level design in places, *Fluff* was a wonderfully presented and enjoyable platformer. With a bit more time and care, who knows? Maybe it could've have competed with the deluge of 16-bit platformers and their mascots.



» [6128 Plus] The careless mother Fluff at last finds one of her missing children. She's lucky she hasn't been reported to Social Services yet.



» [6128 Plus] Frozen wastelands and waterfalls won't scare this brave fluffy pink blob.



» [6128 Plus] Fluff jumps for joy at finding some health -restoring fruit. She's going to need it in the final level.

MORE GAMES TO PLAY



» SPACE GUN

■ DEVELOPER: **OCEAN SOFTWARE**
■ YEAR: **1992**

■ A conversion of the arcade lightgun alien-blasting game. Originally, it was destined for the GX4000 until Ocean changed its mind and released this on disk only in France. We can see why. This very nearly made it to the Retro Stinker area! The crosshair moves smoothly, but the rest of the game is a recoloured Speccy port with awful lag. A real shame given this is the only dedicated 6128 Plus commercial release apart from *Fluff*.



» RICK DANGEROUS 6128+

■ DEVELOPER: **FANO, BDC IRON & MACDEATH**
■ YEAR: **2009**

■ The original game was either loved or loathed, depending on how you felt about its traps and instant deaths. If you can get past the trial-and-error aspect, it was a joyous *Indiana Jones* homage. In this remake the missing levels, cut-scenes, music and digitised 'Waaah!' sound effect of 16-bit versions have been added, plus it featured upgraded graphics, recoloured with a new status panel.



» D-DAY

■ DEVELOPER: **LORICIELS**
■ YEAR: **1992**

■ This is actually a compilation of games, but featured amongst previously-released titles are two new ones – *Paratroopers* and *Infantry*. The one we're focussing on here is the latter that uses the enhanced Plus colours and plays like a more tactical precursor to *Cannon Fodder*. You take control of a small band of brothers clearing villages of troops, tanks, bunkers, grenadiers and snipers. All in all, great WWII fun!



» FROGGER

■ DEVELOPER: **EXECUTIONER**
■ YEAR: **2007**

■ An arcade-perfect port of the classic coin-op. Richard 'Executioner' Wilson coded this using hardware sprites to get smooth-moving characters and coloured it to match the arcade original as closely as possible from the large Plus palette. Richard also coded the WinApe emulator, which is by far the best emulator for the Amstrad, especially if you want to play these Plus games on your PC.

STRYKER IN THE CRYPTS OF TROGAN

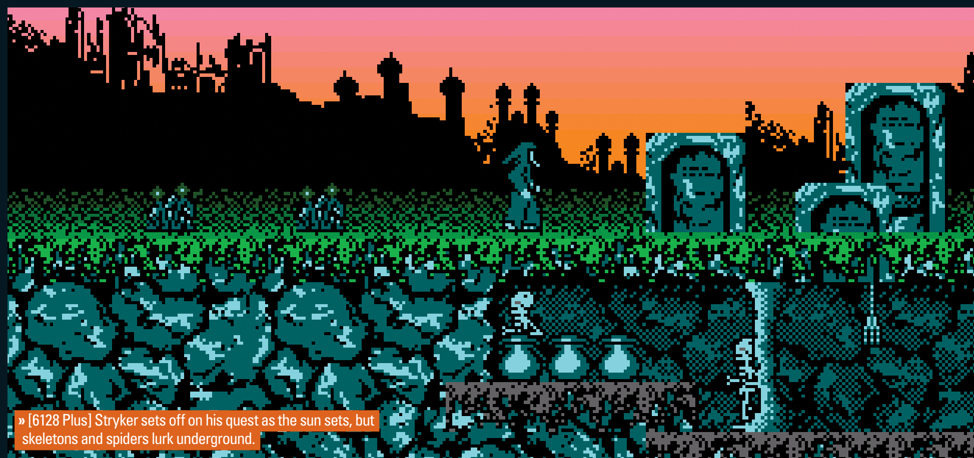
■ DEVELOPER: **CODEMASTERS** ■ YEAR: **1992**

■ If you want to argue technicalities, this here is a 464 Plus game – being that it was released on cassette only and Amstrad made the decision not to include a tape port with the 6128 Plus. But with a little modding you could add your own tape port and, of course, disk dumps were made quickly. Additional presentation and music was also included if your machine had 128k. Therefore, *Stryker* is simply too good not to include here.

There was a big fuss about *Stryker* at the time, the additional Plus features that Amstrad touted were allegedly only possible when using a £25 cart. Which was later discovered as false. Using a sequence of machine code commands, you could emulate the lockout chip in the cartridge. *Stryker* was one of the first to do this, and was a £3 budget tape release.

Those of you who are familiar with *Switchblade* will recognise the gameplay, it was made by the same coder, Jeff Calder. Not much has changed, as you descend into an underground nightmare trying to collect together all the lost pieces of a weapon before confronting the evil Trogan.

Once you get to grips with the nasties that suddenly spring up from under you, *Stryker* is a absorbing exploration platformer, with stunning graphics making good use of the Plus palette.



» [6128 Plus] Stryker sets off on his quest as the sun sets, but skeletons and spiders lurk underground.



» [6128 Plus] The sky fades dark and years of gaming tells us this can only mean one thing – a nasty big ugly boss awaits...

"If you are familiar with Switchblade you will recognise the gameplay, it was made by the same coder, Jeff Calder"

RETRO STINKER

» BURGER PARTY

■ DEVELOPER: **FUTURS** ■ YEAR: **1995**

■ In this zany shoot-'em-up you play a ketchup bottle blasting giant burgers whilst squishing tomatoes for ammo. However, you can only squirt one bullet at a time. This is nothing more than a glorified tech demo.



» BEST OF THE BEST

■ DEVELOPER: **LORICIELS**
■ YEAR: **1991**

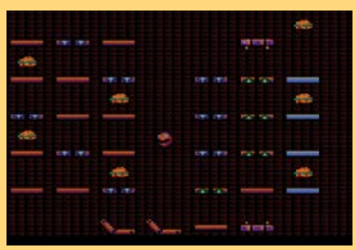
■ This was also released on standard CPCs and the GX4000, where it was known as *Panza Kick Boxing*. Unlike the other Amstrad versions, this 6128 Plus offering features an all new new training mode that does add to the gameplay. Annoyingly, the GX4000 version has a larger playing area, which grates a little. Whatever you played it on, though, it was a superior kickboxing simulation with a huge range of moves and fluid animation.



» L'AIGLE D'OR - LE RETOUR

■ DEVELOPER: **LORICIELS**
■ YEAR: **1991**

■ Non-French speakers are going to have a rough time playing this with a lot of French text to read and no English language version available. Which is a shame, really, as this is a really cool shoot-'em-up with a lot of depth involving hacking computers, solving puzzles, minigames and exploration elements. It features some nifty animation and nice shading on the graphics, too.



» BUMPY'S ARCADE FANTASY

■ DEVELOPER: **LORICIELS**
■ YEAR: **1992**

■ You control Bumpy bouncing around the screen off platforms and trampolines avoiding nasties and spikes to reach the exit. It's a simple action puzzler despite later levels getting fiendishly difficult. There's little difference in the graphics between the CPC and Plus versions, which are basic looking to begin with. However, that doesn't matter when the game itself is such a joy to play.



» CALL #BD10'N'OEUF

■ DEVELOPER: **FENYX KELL**
■ YEAR: **2005**

■ If you think Dizzy had a tough time, spare a thought for his French cousin who needs a friend to roll him from danger! You need to push your 'oeuf' (egg) to the exit avoiding holes, spikes and bouncing balls in this public domain release with the weirdest title in the list. Nice graphics and jolly music mask an incredibly frustrating game requiring nanosecond timing! With only three levels, it's a short game that feels unfinished.



EyeToy fact

■ Because the EyeToy connects to the PS2 via USB, it'll also connect to your PC – and with the correct drivers, it's possible to use it as a standard webcam.

EyeToy

» PLATFORM: PLAYSTATION 2 » RELEASED: 2003 » COST: £39.99 (LAUNCH, WITH EYETOY: PLAY), £1+ (TODAY)

Nintendo might have captured the casual gaming audience with the Wii's motion controls, but the company was simply capitalising on an existing trend that emerged during Sony's dominance of the market. PS2 owners were well-served with all manner of non-traditional controllers, and sandwiched between the era of dance mats and the rise of *Guitar Hero*, you'll find the EyeToy. Conceived by Richard Marks during a prerelease presentation of the PS2, this USB camera tracked player motions and included a microphone for voice commands.

While the EyeToy was functionally little more than a standard webcam, it was a big success for Sony. The peripheral was cheap enough to bundle with a collection of minigames for the price of a standard game, and its intuitive gesture-based party games caught on quickly with players around the world buying up the device. Sony eventually shipped over 10 million EyeToy units, including a smaller redesigned model, with 24 dedicated EyeToy games released and dozens more featuring optional support for the add-on. It's also one of the few add-ons to have inspired notable successors, as Sony followed the device up with the PlayStation Eye and PlayStation Camera for PS3 and PS4 respectively, while Microsoft made the Kinect add-on for Xbox 360 and Xbox One. *



EDITOR'S CHOICE EyeToy: Play

The launch game that sold the EyeToy is still one of the best reasons to own one, as it contains a good selection of a dozen games that go down well at parties. Smacking miniature ninjas in Kung Foo is still a compelling high score challenge, Keep Ups adapts the classic test of football skill to the videogame world, and you'll be lucky if you can get George Formby's *When I'm Cleaning Windows* out of your head after playing Wishi Washi. You can pick this up for pennies now, too, as loads of copies were sold at the time.





BEYOND GAMES

The mid-Nineties was a turbulent time for the industry with many developers closing their doors, unable to keep up with the huge budgets. Beyond Games is one of the few to survive, so Kieren Hawken found out how it became so resilient

Founded in 1991 by Kris Johnson, the story of Beyond Games started much like any other. "At the crazy young age of eight years old, I started making computer games for friends and family," Kris remembers. Pretty much out of nowhere, Radio Shack introduced a personal computer called the TRS-80. It had big blocky graphics, only in black or white, and included BASIC, in which I was proficient with. The cost was way cheaper than the Apple II, and my dad was pretty excited. We were one of the first households to buy it. On the first day, my dad pulled an all-nighter creating a *Star Trek* battle game. I was very excited about the possibilities and for the next couple years I honed my skills.

"Even though I was building games, I felt really limited by the chunky monotone graphics, no sound and no controllers, let alone modern conveniences like a disk or hard drive! Then Atari jumped into the personal computer market, introducing the Atari 400/800. It was my dream machine. I saved up and bought one, then spent day and night building games. I read every book I could get my hands on. The system was simple to program and had great graphics, sound and supported all the 2600 controllers. It also had tons of great games being released, not only from Atari, but other smaller developers as well. I was reaching the bounds of games I could make using BASIC, and slowly taught myself to program using bare metal assembly language. It was a whole different way of coding, and took much longer to code simple things, but the results were stunning. My game quality jumped light years! Sadly I never released anything in the wild, even though I really wanted to."



» The Beyond Games team set about recording all the video they need to create *Ultra Vortek* on the Jaguar.

BEYOND'S EVOLVING LOGO

The videogame industry was ever-changing, though, as Kris soon found out. "By 1983, the entire videogame market crashed hard and made it really difficult for anyone to break into the industry," he laments. "In the late eighties, Nintendo and Sega had risen from the console ashes to become the market leaders. I played tons of games on my NES and Genesis, and I was dying to make games for them. I sent letters to both Sega and Nintendo in hopes of scoring a development system, but neither replied."

This might have put some people off, but Kris was eager to make a career out of games and returned to his first love. "I had always been a huge fan of Atari since the early days, and when I saw they had re-emerged with a new console, I was interested. I bought a Lynx in a local store and was blown away. I had so many ideas I wanted to create. I sent a letter to Atari asking for development details. Even though I didn't have an office or any employees, let alone any games on the market, Atari still replied! Maybe it was my multicolour letterhead, or the company name and logo I put together, but they said I could buy a dev kit for under $1,000! I was so excited. I returned the paperwork with my cheque the next day, and was playing with the dev kit a week later. I couldn't believe I finally had my own console development system!"



» The early head office for Beyond Games was also a nightclub, so the team often indulged in a few drinks after hours.



» Tim Huntsman, dressed as a character from *Battle Wheels*, celebrates winning an award at the CES show in 1993.

> **"I spent day and night building games. I read every book I could get my hands on"**
> Kris Johnson

But let's a rewind a little here, as Beyond Games wasn't Kris's first business venture, far from it. "One summer, during my early college years at the university of Utah, two major music bars closed down," Kris explains. "A friend and I, being young and naive, felt like there was a huge opportunity for a new nightclub, and we thought we'd have a real blast. We found a cool space and borrowed some money from friends and family to open the business. I was only 19 and the drinking age was 21, so I couldn't even enter my nightclub during business hours!

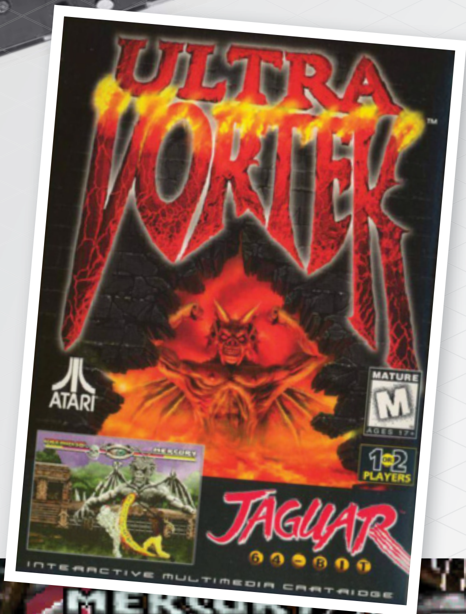
In the first few months, my partner lost interest and left me holding the bag. It was challenging and I had to learn a ton quickly to survive, including building teams, tracking inventory and hands-on business management. I met so many creative people, from artists to musicians. I would work day and night on games, and pop by the club to listen to bands and review inventory. Over the years, I had lots of major bands play the club and would occasionally introduce patrons and musicians to my games. Some of the bands included Oasis, Toad The Wet Sprocket, and The Wallflowers. I was even talking to bands about licensing their songs for my games, before that was really a thing."

Kris' experience meeting people promoted him to use his club as a means of sourcing staff for his games company and most of the team that would end up working at Beyond Games came from Kris' bar. The first of these was Clark Stacy, who is now the CEO of Kris' company. "I was working as a bouncer and bartender in a nightclub in 1990, and the owner of the club was a self-taught programming genius whose dream was to start a game development company," he remembers. He was creating prototype games for the Lynx during the day, doing pretty much all of the development by himself. At night he'd bring a bunch of Lynx consoles and his latest demos down to the pub after we locked up, and a group of us would stay ▶

INSTANT EXPERT

- *Battle Wheels* was the winner of the prestigious 1993 Consumer Electronics Show Innovations Award.
- **Moving from self-publishing to developing games for other companies Beyond produced titles for titans such as Activision, Namco and Atari.**
- *Ultra Vortek* was the only game released that took advantage of the Jaguar Voice Modem for online play.
- **There were a total of three games released in the *Battle Wheels* series, as well as several cancelled versions.**
- Atari was so impressed by *Battle Wheels* that it signed Beyond up as one of the very first Jaguar developers.
- **Beyond Games prototyped games based on the *Repo Man* movie, Metallica and even Barbie that went unreleased.**
- All of Beyond's unreleased Atari Lynx titles were picked up by indie publishers Songbird Productions.
- **In 2003 Beyond Games changed its name to Smart Bomb Interactive only to change it again just a few years later to its current name WildWorks.**
- The company now concentrates on producing titles for children and current game *Animal Jam* is one of the most played MMO's in the world with over 50 million registered users!
- **iOS title *Play Wild!* Became the number-one downloaded iPad game for kids in 35 countries.**





there playing them at the bar until the sun came up." Another one of these people was Beyond designer Tim Huntsman. "I worked at the club that Kris owned," he says. "I was (and still am) a long-time tabletop gamer. He had just gotten a dev kit for the Atari Lynx and wanted to do a car combat type of game. Because I was a *Car Wars* player I offered to help. That's where it all started for me."

So what originally made Kris choose the Lynx as *the* system to develop for? "I read a review of the Lynx hardware in a gaming magazine before the system was released and I was very curious, especially about the multiplayer support. Then after playing with one in a store, I immediately bought one and became a huge fan. Soon after showing friends, they all decided to buy their own as well. We played a lot of games together, especially *Slime World* and *Warbirds*. A four-player game of *Warbirds* was amazing and really showed off the Lynx's full potential, it sparked all kinds of game design ideas for me. You know a great product when you show it to your friends and they immediately want to buy one. This happened with the iPhone, and today I'm seeing it happen when I show people my HTC Vive VR headset!"



It's clear the multiplayer aspects of the Lynx that led to the design of *Battle Wheels*. "My goal for *Battle Wheels* was a game with simple controls that anyone could pick up and play, but also had enough depth to keep advanced players engaged," Kris tells us. "I wanted to push the Lynx hardware, including lots of scaling graphics, and finally I had my mind set on six-player support. I'm a huge fan of iterative game design and I spent six months playtesting and refining the game, taking lots of input along the way. This included many late-night play sessions at my club with patrons. I also recruited Lynx players through online posts, who I mailed out prototype cartridges. I received tons of feedback and I believe it's a critical part of any game."

Although *Battle Wheels* was very much a solo project by Kris he didn't want to take all the credit. "I had almost finished *BW* when Tim Huntsman, a bouncer and musician at my nightclub, who also shared my passion of gaming, joined Beyond. He designed more arenas and wrote the game manual. He also joined me travelling to promote the company and pretty much became the face of the game. Tim is by far one of the best gamers I have ever met, and is a master of spotting and exploiting player patterns." Tim himself has his own memories of *Battle Wheels*, "The game was fantastic," he says. "Up to six linked players and you could jump out of your car and continue fighting on foot too. It was a fun game to play and promote!"


» Buzzsaw, AKA Tim Hunstman, takes some time out from kicking butt in *Ultra Vortek* to have a crafty cigarette.









» [Jaguar] Volcana was one of the most popular characters in *Ultra Vortek* and was played by professional actress Toni Fitzgerald.

Unfortunately, Beyond came to the Lynx just as Atari was changing its focus to its new Jaguar console. Atari was already impressed with Kris' abilities so it invited him to come and take a look at its new hardware. "Gary Tramiel offered to give us a demo, so I flew out a few weeks later," Kris recalls. "Bill Rehbock greeted me and gave me a tour, then he showed me the Jag prototype. I was impressed with the graphics quality, especially compared with other consoles, but the initial games were really rough. A few months later, totally unannounced, a couple dev kits showed up at my office. There was very little documentation, just a few rough graphic demos. I muddled through the demo source code and started building an understanding of the system. It was slow going at first, and it took a lot of experimentation to figure things out. My first demo was just getting a background image scrolling around, it looked amazing with the full-colour support, and everyone that saw it was super impressed."

Initially, Kris planned to produce a Jaguar sequel to *Battle Wheels* and an image of this was even featured on the console's box, but Atari had other ideas about what it wanted. "Atari wanted us to do a fighting game and I had a background in martial arts, which helped massively in the character/move design and creation," Tim remembers. "I wrote the backgrounds for the different characters in *Ultra Vortek*, helped with the live rotoscoping, edited down film to capture the proper animation frames to hand off to the artists. It was a very 'indie' type of dev environment to be sure. The whole team contributed in all kinds of ways."

Tim ended up playing the part of *Buzzsaw* in the game as well as providing the voice of The Guardian, but he was not the only one to get really hands on with the game, Clark Stacey played a big part, too. "*Ultra Vortek* was a blast to make! Kris still owned the pub at that time but it was closed during the day, so we built a filming backdrop on the stage where bands played ▶

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



KRIS N. JOHNSON

■ Kris' first venture into videogame publishing was when he set up Beyond Games and he still runs the company from his office in Salt Lake City, Utah to this very day, albeit under a new name – WildWorks Interactive. As well as being owner of the company he is still very much involved in programming.



MEATS MEIER

■ Jim 'Meats' Meier is now a highly renowned 3D artist and animator who has worked on big budget Holywood blockbusters such as *Hellboy* and *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*. You can check out the work of the self-proclaimed 'Organic Mechanic' over at 3Dartspace.com.



CLARK STACEY

■ Clark now operates in the role of CEO for WildWorks Interactive, which is some promotion from his early days pouring pints and keeping the peace at Kris' nightclub. Clark is still very much involved in producing games and writing great stories to go with them.



TIM HUNTSMANN

■ Like Clark, Tim also started off working in Kris' club as a bouncer. Since leaving Beyond Games in 1995 Tim has worked as a Lead Game Designer for such companies as Acclaim, Microsoft, Midway and Disney. He currently heads up game design at TapStar Interactive.

DEFINING GAMES



BATTLE WHEELS

LYNX, 1993

■ Undoubtedly Beyond's finest moment was when its debut game *Battle Wheels* became the winner of the 1993 Consumer Electronics Show Innovations Award. Pushing the Atari Lynx to its limits, *Battle Wheels* is a wonderful cross between a driving game and a first-person shooter that allows up to six players to compete over Comlynx. The most unique feature of the game was the ability to continue on foot if your vehicle became wrecked. The scaling and rotation effects prompted envious eyes from Game Boy and Game Gear owners.



ULTRA VORTEK

JAGUAR, 1995

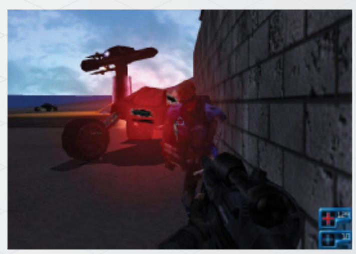
■ When Atari asked Beyond Games to make a fighting game, it was very much entering new territory as nobody in the team had any previous experience with the genre, so it's surprising that *Ultra Vortek* turned out so well. Although it's essentially a *Mortal Kombat* clone, the team put enough of its own original touches in there to set the game apart from its source material. The array of characters include the shape-shifting T-1000 inspired Mercury and they all have their own charms and fighting style. There are more than a few secrets to discover here, too.



PAC-MAN RALLY

GAMECUBE/PS2/PC/PSP, 2006

■ Beyond Games developed several games for Namco but *Pac-Man Rally* is its most prestigious. As you may have guessed, it was Namco's answer to *Mario Kart* featuring its own iconic mascot. Alongside the yellow guy himself are other characters from the *Pac-Man* franchise, as well as a few guest stars from other Namco games, such as *Mappy*, *Mr. Driller* and *Katamari Damacy*. Released for the GameCube, PS2, PC and PSP, each version has its own unique roster and secrets to discover. Home versions also feature a four-player mode.



REDLINE

PC, 1999

■ This is the sequel to *Battle Wheels* and carries over all the previous game's key aspects while improving on them to match the advanced technology. Released exclusively for the PC, the main enhancement in *Redline* is that more focus has been given to the FPS element as running around on foot is now a key element. Like the Lynx predecessor, *Redline* is also even more enjoyable when played over a network with other people. Beyond actually planned to release a Dreamcast version of the game too, but sadly this never came to fruition.



TIMELINE

1991 ■ Beyond Games is founded by Kris Johnson in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

1992 ■ A team of talented locals is formed to make games for the Atari Lynx.

1993 ■ Beyond publishes its first game, *Battle Wheels* for the Atari Lynx, to widespread acclaim.

1994 ■ The company announces three games for the Jaguar: *Battle Wheels*, *Ultra Vortex* and *Azeron*.

1995 ■ Its first Jaguar game is released, *Mortal Kombat* clone *Ultra Vortek*.

1996 ■ Atari discontinues the Jaguar and all existing software development is cancelled leaving Beyond's *Mech Tiles*, Azeron and *Alien Vs. Predator 2* unreleased.

■ After receiving a Saturn development kit Beyond decides against producing games for the Sega console due to the frustrating architecture.

1997 ■ Accolade approaches Beyond to produce a *Battle Wheels* sequel for Windows PCs and a deal is struck between the companies.

1999 ■ *Battle Wheels 2*, now known as *Redline*, is released for PC. PS2 and Dreamcast versions are also announced but later cancelled.

2000 ■ After receiving its PS2 dev kit, Beyond decides to code a new game from the ground up to make better use of the hardware.

2001 ■ The third game in the *Battle Wheels* series, *Motor Mayhem*, is released for PS2 and features several characters from Jaguar game *Ultra Vortek*.

■ Songbird publish the formally unreleased Beyond title *Cyber Virus* for the Atari Lynx.

2002 ■ *Hot Wheels: Velocity X* is published by THQ for PS2, Game Cube and PC.

2003 ■ The 3DO Company files for bankruptcy taking Beyond with it after failure to pay for projects.

2005 ■ The company is saved thanks to a cash injection from Utah tech company Canopy Group. It returns as Smart Bomb Interactive.

2006 ■ The new company signs a deal to produce several games for Namco Bandai including titles based on the *Peanuts* cartoon and *Pac-Man*.

2014 ■ The company goes through a name change once again to become WildWorks.

2015 ■ The *Animal Jam* series is launched in association with National Geographic to enormous success leading to numerous spin-offs. This series is now the main focus of the company.

at night, and sort of figured out how to capture footage we could use as we went along. We created our own costume elements and choreography. Tim and I both had martial arts backgrounds, so we were able to play around with different kicks and strikes to find moves that worked well against the green screen, we were learning the process through trial and error."

Going from developing 2D pixels to digitised images, motion capture and 3D effects was a big change for Beyond. Kris knew this and set out on a hunt to find a professional artist who could take them to the next level, that man was Meats Meier and the call came very much out the blue. "My start in videogames happened when I got an unexpected call from Kris Johnson," Meats remembers. "He called me while I was on the job working as a T-shirt designer. Apparently he had seen my art around town, as I had designed art and posters for local bands. He asked me if I would be interested in designing videogames. I, of course, said, 'Hell yes!' I quit my job on the spot. I started working for him soon after. I was lucky, and I would like to think that Kris was a bit lucky as well because I took to 3D and was able to pick it up fairly quickly. I'll always be thankful to Kris for giving me my start, it's been my passion every day since then."

Ultra Vortek was well received by the majority of the gaming media and although Beyond was already juggling the development of a number of different titles Atari was very keen to set them to work on a very new and very exciting project, as Kris explains: "After the launch of *UV*, Atari invited us out to gauge our interest in creating the sequel to *AvP* for the Jaguar CD! This project became the studio's full focus and all other projects were immediately put on hold." Unfortunately the Jaguar was failing in the marketplace and Atari took the decision to cut its losses and exit the industry and Kris was shocked at the way it all came about: "After the Jaguar, Atari was transitioning to PC games and had shown interest in publishing *Battle Wheels*. We were progressing towards a contract, when suddenly the Tramiels decided to exit the game industry completely and transition into storage devices. I wish I had the resources at the time to buy the Atari brand and product library!"

The demise of Atari saw Beyond go through a very transitional period. "After the Atari shutdown, we snagged their top producer Tal Funke-Bilu, who like me, was also a diehard Atari fan," Kris recalls. "Then we dabbled for about a year with the Sega Saturn, but I was cautious of developing for another niche console. And I found its multiprocessor architecture



» [PC] A game featuring Snoopy in a biplane sounds like a terrible idea, but it's actually quite a lot of fun.



» Beyond was set to create a follow up to the Jaguar's bestselling game, *AVP*. It didn't get beyond the planning stage.



» [PC] *Hot Wheels: Velocity X* was developed by Beyond for the PS2, Game Cube and PC. It received mixed reviews.



» [PS2] Released exclusively for the PS2, *Motor Mayhem* is the third and final instalment in the *Battle Wheels* series.



very frustrating to program. Then Ted Taquechi, former Atari producer, was hired by Accolade and he invited us to present *Battle Wheels* to the decision-makers. After a visit to our studio, they were impressed with the team and we signed a publishing agreement with them a month later."

From here Beyond really got into a rhythm producing a further sequel to *Battle Wheels* and *Redline* in *Motor Mayhem* for Infogrames (who had now bought Accolade) and multi-format game based on the Hot Wheels brand for THQ. But little known to Kris, trouble was just around the corner that would almost cost him his whole business. "By 2003, Beyond Games had around 50 employees and a high overhead. We were working on *Air Cavalry* for 3DO, and after three months of them not paying us, they declared bankruptcy and shut down, leaving us in a terrible spot. Luckily, prior to this we had been looking for ways to take on bigger opportunities and move away from the publisher/developer treadmill. This would require giving up some company ownership for increased security. We started discussions with local venture capital companies and found a great match with the Canopy Group. This was their first venture into the entertainment space and it was a perfect match! As all of us were now getting older, one of our goals was to focus on more kid-friendly products. We started slowly, scaling back the team to stretch our resources and continuing to build games for publishers."

Beyond Games went under a brand change and emerged as Smart Bomb interactive before transitioning yet again into its current, more family-friendly, name of WildWorks interactive where it's having tremendous success with the MMO *Animal Jam*, which is developed in partnership with National Geographic. Despite all the challenges and changes of direction Kris is still every bit as excited about the industry as he ever was. "I feel lucky to have such a long career building games that I enjoy playing, with the chance to work on such a range of hardware and variety of different game styles," he says. "I'm honoured to work with so many amazingly creative and talented individuals. I come to work every day excited and love what I do. I still have dozens of game designs that I plan to build and feel like some of my best work is ahead of me. *

Special thanks to Kris Johnson, Clark Stacey, Tim Hunstman and Meats Meier.

KEEPING THE LYNX ALIVE

When Beyond Games moved over to the Jaguar from the Lynx it left a lot of projects unfinished. Some of these were going to be released as part of an intended Lynx relaunch, should the Jaguar be a success, but sadly the Jaguar was anything but. After years of sitting in limbo on Kris Johnson's hard drive he was contacted by Carl Forhan of Songbird Productions, a company that was set up to continue publishing games for the Lynx after it was discontinued. Kris explains further how he struck a deal: "I was excited when Carl contacted me and had interest in completing my unfinished projects, and for pretty much the cost of the equipment and shipping. I sold my original Amiga computer and Lynx development hardware to him. I included instructions for building new levels for *Cyber Virus*, along with various other details about the state of the game. I was so busy developing *Redline*, that sadly I had no time for involvement. But I was excited when I received the finished cartridges from Carl! I dropped everything to play the final version and I think he did a great job finishing up the game!" *Cyber Virus* was released in 2001 to and sold out numerous production runs.



DNA OF BEYOND GAMES



DRIVE CLUB

■ Driving games became the main theme for the company in the early years of Beyond Games. From futuristic efforts such as *Battle Wheels* and *Redline* to crazy capers with *Pac-Man Rally* and *Hot Wheels*, it's a genre that the company really became known for. Kris Johnson has stated that this is something that the company very much became known for in the industry and actively brought them work.



TECHNICAL PROWESS

■ Many of Kris' colleagues have stated that he is the best programmer that they ever worked with and the engines he developed for Beyond's games are extremely impressive. He consistently managed to push machines to their limits and was even recognised for his coding abilities with the prestigious CES Innovations Award. Kris also encouraged his employees to aim for similar heights, too.



PEANUTS

■ Kris loved working with the *Peanuts* licence so much that he ended up buying it! He explains a bit further for us, "We had so much fun [making] *Snoopy Vs. The Red Baron*, that we decided to buy the *Peanuts* licence and we built and published the multiplayer flight combat game *Snoopy Flying Ace* for Xbox Live after. It was a product that focused on large multiplayer battles and was something I could play with my nephew!"



DRINKING GAMES

■ Before Kris started Beyond Games he bought a local night club and music venue which he continued to manage alongside his then-new videogame business. Some of the company's best ideas allegedly came out of drunken late nights in the club and many of his best employees came from within the same walls. Some of the big-name musical acts to play at Kris' venue include Oasis, Toad the Wet Sprocket, and The Wallflowers.



KIDS CLUB

■ Beyond Games spent most of its earlier years producing violent adult-orientated games such as *Ultra Vortek* and *Deathmatch* but now the company has ended up in the complete opposite direction under its new persona of WildWorks. Its focus is now very much on the children's market with titles such as *Snoopy Flying Ace*, *Bee Movie* and *Animal Jam* that have all brought considerable success to the company.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

Super Scramble Simulator

» **PLATFORM:** ZX SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** ARP SOFTWARE » **RELEASED:** 1989

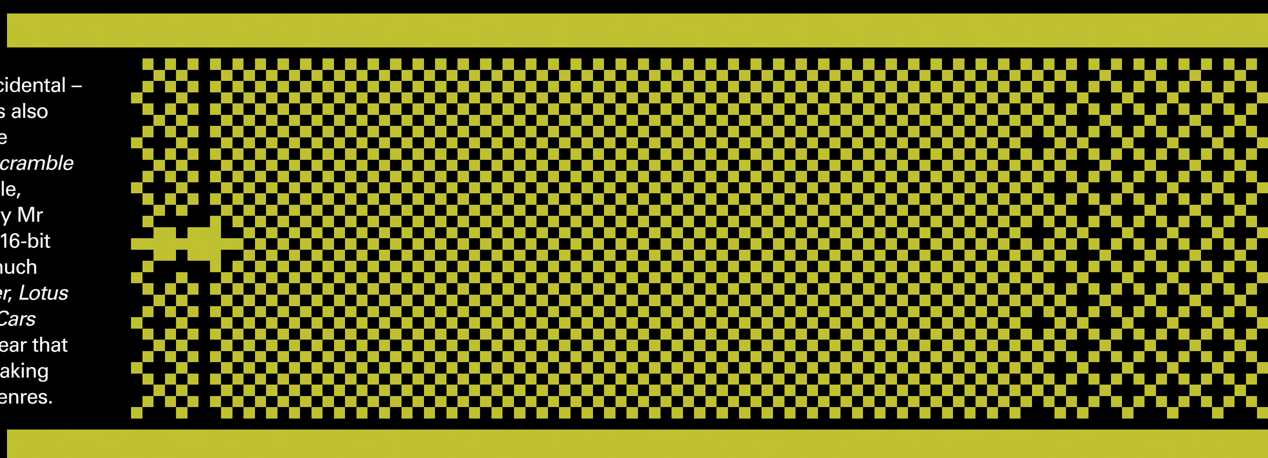
With its slower, more considered pace, less playful tone and harsher mechanics, *Super Scramble Simulator* was never going to fare well in comparison to established favourite, *Kikstart*. The clue, however, is in the name – while the 'simulator' suffix was chronically overused at the time (and often on titles that *definitely* didn't warrant it), this tricky game delivered the very definition of a simulation. Manual gears, weight distribution, engine stalls, three-dimensional hazard traversal, strict time penalties for failure… in truth, comparing this to *Kikstart* is no less ridiculous than comparing *Gran Turismo* to something like *Ridge Racer*.

While this combination of tricky mechanics came at the expense of instant playability (as critics at the time were quick to point out, some scathingly so), finally managing to tame your two-wheeled beast was immensely rewarding – learning the 15 courses and mastering each obstacle in turn could slowly turn frustrating failure into satisfying success, with expert speed control and weight management ultimately allowing for faultless runs. Kikstart was all about making trials riding look easy, but *Super Scramble Simulator* delved deeper into the sport to deliver a *true* trial where needing to earn your success made it taste all the sweeter in the end. *



BIO

Similarities to *Kikstart* are not coincidental – original coder Shaun Southern was also responsible for those simpler, more user-friendly trials games. *Super Scramble Simulator* would be his last 8-bit title, his studio Magnetic Fields (formerly Mr Chip Software) moving on to new 16-bit platforms soon after with just as much success. With the likes of *Trailblazer*, *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge* and *Super Cars* among the studio's portfolio, it's clear that his team had quite the knack for making great games across a number of genres.







MORE CLASSIC SUPER SCRAMBLE SIMULATOR MOMENTS

Gearbox Hero



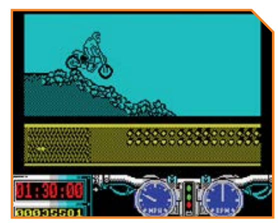
While the controls can be a little fiddly, learning and employing the benefits of a manual gearbox is crucial to success. Lower gears give greater traction on steep inclines, while higher ones allow for greater speed on rare flat sections, with quick shifts sometimes more efficient than braking and/or accelerating.

Offroad Rage



It's almost impossible to play a game like *Super Scramble Simulator* without losing your temper – some obstacles can seem unfair at first while dropping *just* below the minimum speed can stall your engine and going even slightly too fast over a hazard is usually an auto-fail. Keeping your cool in the face of this feels good, though!

Now In 3D!

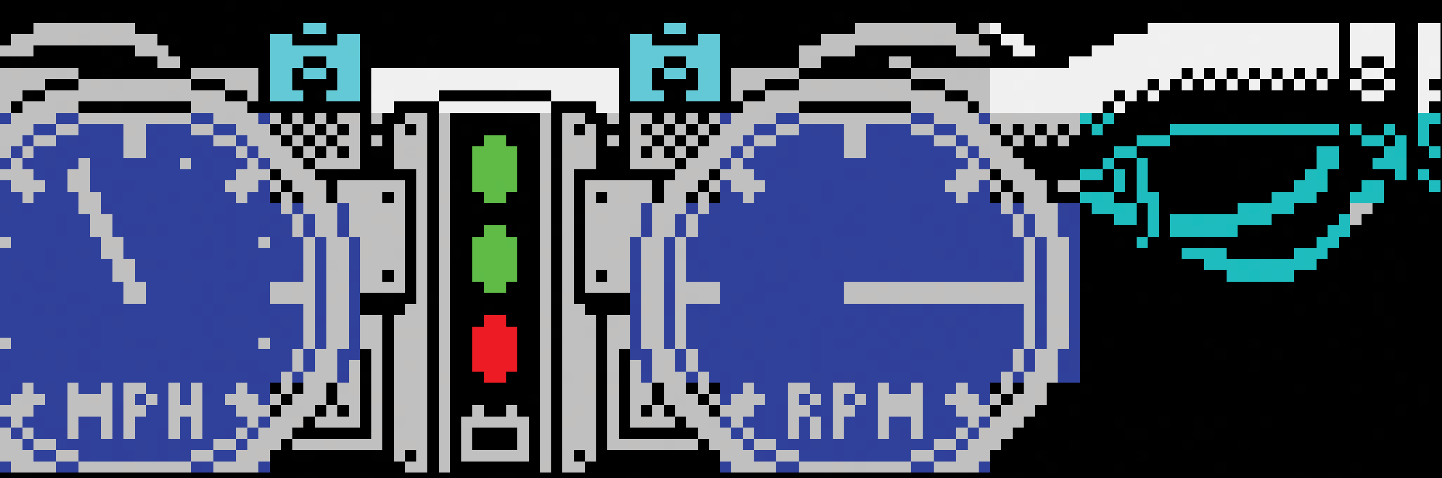


While the lower portion of the screen – which offers an overhead view of the course as you progress – seems a little redundant at first, later courses require you to pay as much attention to it as the top half, as some obstacles actually exist towards the back or front of the side-on 2D stage. Clever stuff…

Lean Into It



Weight distribution is a key feature in physics-based successors to *SSS* and *Kikstart* such as the *Trials* games, but getting to grips with this early version of the system here is no less satisfying. See a dip? No worries – hit cruising speed, pop the front wheel then lean forward to endo your back wheel clear too. See ya later, pothole!







THE MAKING OF FROSTBITE

Darran Jones braves treacherous icy waters to speak to Steve Cartwright about his interesting adaptation of a classic Eighties coin-op



FROSTBITE 101

■ Released in 1983, *Frostbite* was a fast-paced arcade-like game for the Atari 2600, which cast you in the boots of Frostbite Bailey. The aim of the game was to jump back and forth across ice floes in order to complete an igloo. Once all 16 blocks had been collected you could move to the next, even harder, stage.

When you look at the Activision of today, with its yearly releases of popular franchises, it's hard to imagine that it was once a thriving hotbed for innovation and creativity. Effectively the industry's first ever third-party publisher, Activision was formed after a dispute between David Crane, Alan Miller, Bob Whitehead, Larry Kaplan and Atari's CEO, Ray Kassar. After the developers failed to secure royalties and credit for their Atari 2600 games, David, Alan and Bob formed Activision, alongside Jim Levy and Richard Munchmore, and went into business for themselves. Activision quickly built a reputation for releasing excellent games, primarily for the Atari 2600, and was soon attracting other talented coders who were eager to receive credit for the games they were creating (a policy Atari was strictly against at the time).

Among these talented coders was Steve Cartwright, who not only joined Activision in 1982 as a designer/programmer, but also released two games, *Barnstorming* and *Megamania*, that same year. "Things had gotten so crazy at Activision due to the rapid expansion," he recalls. "The four designers (Dave Crane, Bob Whitehead, Al Miller, and I) had split off into a spall office several miles from the main office. It was known as the Cupertino Design Center (across the street from the current Apple offices). That was actually the genesis of the 'Design Center' concept… putting small groups of people who worked well together into their own separate location." 1983 would prove to be an extremely productive year for Steve and he worked on no less than three new games, *Seaquest*, a fun submarine-based shooter, *Plaque Attack* and the excellent *Frostbite*. "[*Frostbite*] was a three-to-four-month project," he tells us. "Back then, all games were entirely designed and created by one person."

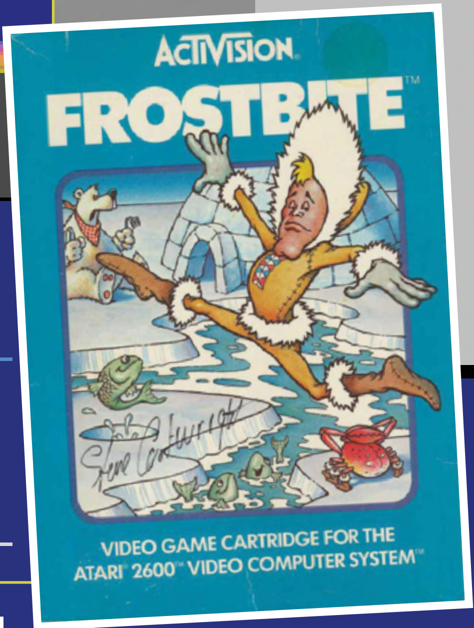


» [Atari 2600] If you don't build your igloo within 45 seconds you will freeze to death.

Steve's previous three games had all been shoot-'em-ups of various descriptions, making *Frostbite* quite the new experience for him. The aim of the game was to guide Frostbite Bailey across ice floes, collecting ice from each floe in order to build an igloo. Once the igloo was completed, Bailey could move across to the next level. While many assumed the game was inspired by Gottlieb's *Q*bert* (the tiles would change colour when you stepped on them) which had been released in late 1982, *Frostbite*'s origins came from an earlier arcade game… "I think the idea for *Frostbite* came from playing *Frogger*," admits Steve. "*Frostbite* came out at the same time as *Q*bert*, so people naturally thought that's where the idea came from due to the nature of jumping and turning the colour of the landing spot. But I never saw *Q*bert* until *Frostbite* was finished."



» [Atari 2600] If you touch the polar bear he'll comically chase you off the screen.



"The original idea was about jumping on rocks across a lava flow but the blue and white colours worked so much better on the Atari 2600"
Steve Cartwright

While it's easy to make comparisons with *Q*bert*, we've always seen *Frostbite* as an excellent take on *Frogger*, so it's great to see our suspicions confirmed by Steve himself. There are no busy roads to cross in *Frostbite*, but the premise was equally as perilous. Frostbite Bailey had been commissioned to build igloos in Alaska, but the fauna of the area had other ideas. Initially, Bailey only had to worry about flocks of snow geese that occasionally appeared onscreen and harassed him as he jumped across the floes, but as the gameplay progressed, Alaskan king crabs, killer clams and even polar bears all began to make an appearance. Interestingly, Steve reveals that the limitations of Atari's 8-bit console helped decide what Alaskan fauna would make it into his game. "Since we were limited to 8-bit graphics – it was mostly about 'what do I think I can make in just eight bits'". Although the distinctive Alaskan setting worked really well, Steve reveals that he originally had a far hotter location in mind for Bailey's debut adventure. "Hmm… I think the original idea was about jumping on rocks across a lava flow," mulls Steve, "but the blue and white colours worked so much better on the Atari 2600."

If deciding to switch from a volcanic setting to an icy one was a relatively easy task. The coding of *Frostbite* proved to be a little trickier for Steve, as he faced all the common problems of a programmer from his period. He had plenty of great ideas for his new game, but he was battling against the hardware constraints of the system it was appearing on. It helped that Steve, like the other coders at Activision, was incredibly talented and able to truly push the Atari 2600's hardware to its limits, but pushing those boundaries wasn't always a simple task… "The difficulties of working on the Atari 2600 are well documented," begins Steve when we quiz him about the teething difficulties he encountered whilst ironing out all the issues of *Frostbite*'s gameplay. "There were always memory issues and screen timing issues," he sighs. "*Megalomania* was still the toughest project technically, because of the nature of the display, but *Frostbite* turned out to be difficult because of the overall game logic and rules – something that is extremely easy with higher programming languages, but presented real problems when writing code in 6502."

Frostbite might have proven tricky for Steve to code, but you wouldn't be able to tell that from playing the game. It was a wonderfully slick product that took the DNA of the aforementioned *Frogger* and adapted it into a brand-new game that proved to be just as challenging as Konami's classic arcade game. As with *Frogger*, the water that Frostbite Bailey has to cross was incredibly dangerous and he'd instantly

IN THE KNOW

- **» PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION
- **» DEVELOPER:** STEVEN CARTWRIGHT
- **» RELEASED:** 1983
- **» PLATFORM:** ATARI 2600
- **» GENRE:** PLATFORMER



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

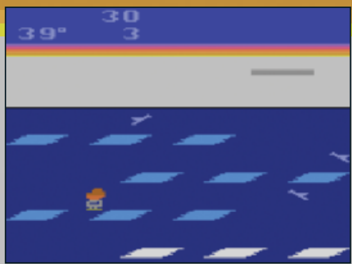
BARNSTORMING (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ATARI 2600
YEAR: 1982

PLAQUE ATTACK
SYSTEM: ATARI 2600
YEAR: 1983

SEAQUEST
SYSTEM: ATARI 2600
YEAR: 1983

AVOIDING FROSTBITE

Useful tips to ensure a high score









LEAP FOR THE STARS

■ Frostbite Bailey is quite an agile chap: you have directional control over him throughout his jump. Use this knowledge to clear particularly large gaps between ice floes, as it leaves you more time to consider your next move.

BEWARE THE BEAR

■ The bothersome polar bear likes to shadow you closely, making it hard to reach your igloo. If you go to the far left of the screen he's unable to reach you, enabling you to double back across the floes when his back is turned.

DON'T GET STRANDED

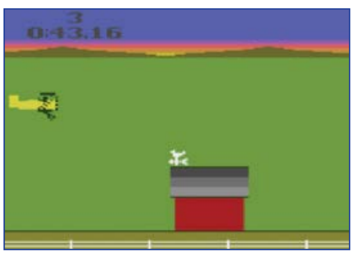
■ Pay attention to the ice floes you haven't stepped on yet. It's all too easy to find yourself stuck on one side of the screen, unable to build new blocks. Quickly jump back to an outer floe whenever you get the chance.

REVERSE THE FLOE

■ Sometimes you'll inevitably find yourself stuck between a rock and a hard place (or a crab and a clam) press the fire button to reverse your floe's direction and move to relative safety. You'll soon retrieve your lost block.

STEVE'S ATARI ITINERARY

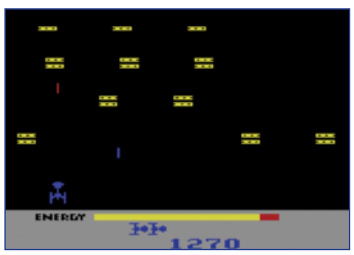
Steve's Activision contributions to the Atari 2600



BARNSTORMING

1982

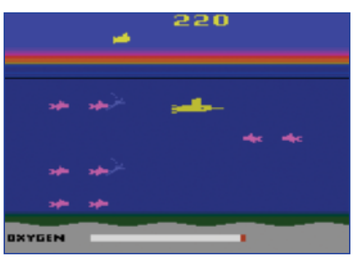
■ Steve's debut Atari 2600 game for Activision was a fun little arcade game where you flew your biplane through a series of barns in the shortest time possible. Coming into contact with various hazards, such as low-flying birds and windmills, would cause your overall time to increase.



MEGAMANIA

1982

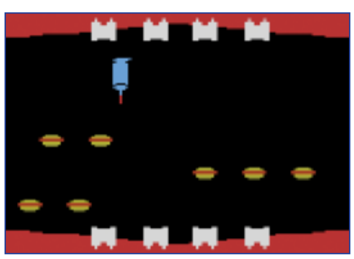
■ This was Steve's most accessible game, as it was later ported to both the Atari 5200 and various 8-bits. It's effectively a port of Sega's arcade game *Astro Blaster*, with cookies, bow ties, hamburgers and other everyday items standing in for the original space-faring enemies.



SEAQUEST

1983

■ This fantastic blaster had you trying to rescue stranded treasure divers while avoiding the incessant attacks of enemy submarines and dangerous sharks. You also needed to continually return to the surface to ensure that you didn't run out of precious oxygen.



PLAQUE ATTACK

1983

■ Set in some unfortunate soul's mouth. The aim of *Plaque Attack* was to use a tube of toothpaste to shoot down the waves of burgers, hotdogs and other foodstuffs that were attempting to damage your molars. Interestingly, you could shoot both above and below you.

drown if he fell into it. The ice floes that Bailey could cross were fairly small in size, meaning Bailey is quite limited in his movement on certain stages. Some levels featured smaller ice floes that allowed for far easier horizontal movement, but for the most part Bailey would constantly have to hop forwards and backwards in order to avoid the many hazards that were intent on pushing him towards a watery grave. Bailey wasn't completely defenceless, though, and he was able to reverse the floe's movement in opposite direction, hopefully giving him enough time to jump to a nearby floe and avoid whatever creature was trying to push him into the dangerous water. While this move was incredibly useful, it also came at a cost – a block of ice would be removed from your current igloo, meaning more jumping in order to restore the lost piece. It's a clever mechanic, but sadly, its origins have long been lost on Steve. "Gee… I can't even remember," he mulls. "Is that how it worked? It was almost 30 years ago…"

Although Steve is sadly unclear on how the movement of ice floes worked in *Frostbite*, he's a lot less hazy on why you were unable to continue to add blocks to your igloo until all the ice floes were the same colour. "That was one of the game logic difficulty I mentioned earlier," he recalls. "It prevented a player from just going back and forth between two ice floes." It's a great mechanic and does indeed make you think about how you tackle those four floes. As with *Frogger*, you're constantly battling against a tight time limit in

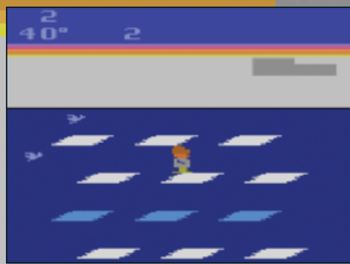


» [Atari 2600] The enemy patterns become a lot more challenging on later levels, with bobbing crabs being added to the mix.



FISH MEAN PRIZES

■ Go out of your way to grab as many fish as you can. They give you a massive points boost that will help you reach an additional life (which are awarded at every 5,000 points). Reach the 20th level and a golden fish will appear.



"IT'S ALL IN THE REFLEXES"

■ Like Pac-Man, when Frostbite Bailey turns corners, you can input moves early, allowing our Arctic hero to whizz around at seemingly impossible speeds. Just be sure to look before you leap.



AVOID DISTRACTIONS

■ On later stages the ice begins to break beneath your feet, before reforming again. Ignore this annoying distraction as it's actually impossible to fall through the gap. Concentrate on staying alive instead.



> "It made the player feel as if they were getting better and more skilled right along with the increasing challenge"
> Steve Cartwright

Frostbite, so you need to make sure that you don't leave an unmarked floe idle for too long, as it will drastically affect your chances of finishing your igloo within the allotted time limit. The time limit was a clever addition to the game as it ensured that Bailey was always constantly moving, looking for ways to cross those floes as quickly as possible so he could reach the next level. When you're in the 'zone' *Frostbite* becomes utterly mesmerising, more so when you realise that you have a fair amount of control over Bailey when moving him between ice floes. The game constantly pushes you to take risks and rewards you handsomely when those risks pay off. "One of the tricks I employed that made *Frostbite* play so well was the fact that as the game increased in speed, the controls increased in sensitivity," Steve continues. "This was groundbreaking in the field that is now known as UX. It made the player feel as if they were getting better and more skilled right along with the increasing challenge."

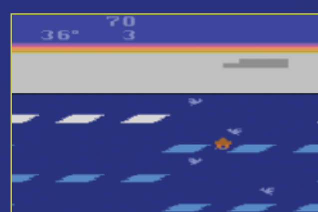
It's a nice touch, to be sure, but *Frostbite*'s greatest strength at the time of its release was in how much it felt like a proper arcade game. Sure it's nowhere near as technically impressive as arcade games of the time were, but it had the same level of polish and the slick gameplay mechanics that made so many classic games such a joy to play. It felt like a lost arcade game that had somehow made its way into your home, like many Activision games felt like at the time. Steve feels its success was down to one thing – rigorous playtesting. "*Frostbite* was one of the most tested games we ever did," he reveals. "The speed of the game increased to the point where objects moved and wrapped around the screen so fast that the appeared at times to be moving backwards – kind of like those old Westerns where the wagon wheels appears to be turning slowly in the opposite direction. Amazingly, if you unfocused your eyes – fell into a 'zone' and played by instinct alone – top players could actually play the game at a pace that was far beyond the ability to visually process what was happening."

Frostbite launched in August 1983 and proved to be extremely popular with gamers. Like many Activision games of the time, it featured the chance to win an embroidered badge if you were able to achieve a certain score (40,000 points, if you're interested). Sadly, despite the fact that it was an excellent action game, Steve feels that it didn't receive the acclaim it deserved and poor timing meant that Frostbite Bailey never get to star in any additional games… "*Frostbite* was released right at the time the Atari game market collapsed," admits Steve, "so any plans for a sequel quickly died."

Frostbite would mark the last Atari 2600 game that Steve would work on for Activision, but he continued at the company for several more years, working on games such as *Hackers*, before moving to Accolade in 1988 and Electronic Arts in 1993. He remains in the industry today, but has fond memories of the Atari 2600 games he made at Activision, including *Frostbite*. "May people consider *Megamania*, *Seaquest*, and *Frostbite* to be the three best fast action games ever done for the Atari 2600," he proudly tells us. "I certainly would never argue with that." *









THE HOUSE OF

When the dead rise, there's only one way to return them to their eternal slumber... Shoot them until there's nothing left! Nick Thorpe loads his revolver and accepts an invitation to Sega's house of horrors...



» [Arcade] Heads explode, eyeballs fly, bones get exposed – if it's disgusting, you'll find it here.



» [Arcade] Just getting to the mansion is no easy task, as zombies patrol the outside.



It's remarkable what a few years of sustained effort will do – after years of ignoring the lightgun game, Sega produced a string of mid-Nineties hits that propelled it to the peak of the genre, including *Jurassic Park*, *Rail Chase*, *Virtua Cop*, *Gunblade NY* among others. While AM2 and AM3 were chasing that lucrative market, AM1 had been occupying itself with other games like *Die Hard Arcade*, however, the time came for the team to join the rest of the company in producing gun games, and a team was put together including veteran producer Rikiya Nakagawa and director Takashi Oda.

AM1's goal was to make a game which would differentiate itself from the internal competition from AM2 and AM3, and initial ideas for a police-themed game were rejected as being too similar to *Virtua Cop*. The team settled on a supernatural horror theme instead, and decided to go all-out with an attempt to appeal to adults – the game would feature zombies, rather than more child-friendly horrors

MEET THE CAST



THOMAS ROGAN

■ This AMS agent is hot-headed and trigger-happy, but still ranks as one of the organisation's top investigators. Sophie's distress call alerts him to the massacre at the mansion. Later in the series, he forms an organisation to eliminate the roaming undead, and plays a prominent role in *The House Of The Dead III*.



AGENT G

■ A cool-headed AMS agent who serves as Rogan's partner. G goes on to survive the incident and makes appearances in all subsequent games – he's injured early on in *The House Of The Dead 2*, and serves as a protagonist in *The House Of The Dead III* and *The House Of The Dead 4 Special*.



SOPHIE RICHARDS

■ A researcher at DBR Corporation, and the fiancée of Thomas Rogan. After an early escape attempt is thwarted by The Hangedman, she's critically injured by The Chariot. Her ultimate fate depends on your skill, but officially she survives and has a child, *The House Of The Dead III* protagonist Lisa Rogan.



DR ROY CURIEN

■ The research director of DBR Corporation and the primary antagonist of the game. Born from a noble family, he inherited the Curien Mansion. His work broke the barrier between life and death, resulting in the creation of zombies. In *The House Of The Dead III*, it is revealed that Curien's experiments had been conducted in the hope of aiding his illness-stricken son Daniel.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

Q&A: WARREN HAWKES

The former Tantalus graphic artist reveals how The House Of The Dead was downsized for home consumption



How did you come to work on the conversions of *THOTD*?
Perfect Entertainment bought out Australian developers Tantalus, a small gifted team based in Melbourne consisting of ex-employees from Beam Software (formerly Melbourne House). Tantalus had ported Sega's latest arcade machine, *Manx TT* to the Saturn with good results. Tantalus was always a little short on experienced game artists, so a couple of artists from Perfect in London were flown over to work on larger projects such as these. *Manx*'s success paved the way for future projects but when *House Of The Dead* dropped into our laps the short development time and large scale of the game meant more staff were needed, both on the art and code side.

At the time I'd finished on *Discworld II*, as well as a cowboy RPG that never got released, and was starting to consider working in America for a change of scenery. Fate played me a good turn with *House Of The Dead*'s schedule being fast tracked and the fact one of Tantalus' artists wanted to work in the UK, so we did a transfer with me going to Melbourne. I didn't know what to expect of Melbourne or Australia and could only imagine something a cross between *Neighbours* and *Mad Max* or anything in-between.

How long was the team given to complete the conversion, and what resources did Sega provide to assist with development?
I flew over to Oz in August 1997 for the game to be finished by early to mid-1998. I believe the PC had a little more time, but it was still a tight schedule with both versions produced back to back with different coders. I personally didn't deal with Sega, most of that was handled by one of the Tantalus directors and producer; the late 'Artie' Kakouris and the company had built up a good reputation after *Manx*. I got the impression Sega didn't hassle us while 'looking after their baby' and there was respect among developers.

Art-wise they dumped a huge back-up drive on us with all of the assets contained from the original ROMs and Softimage scenes. Scanning through the folders we came across some working files and other hidden characters that never made the final cut. One called Mr G, looked like a marble-skinned gorilla of a man wearing a bondage mask and latex pants.

Another was a rather sexy-legged female boss called Syndy who paraded around in a corset and swung a hammer around! I can only guess these characters may have been a little too adult, along with another bunch that looked like a cross between someone in a gimp suit and the cenobites from *Hellraiser*.

The Saturn had a reputation for limited 3D capabilities. What difficulties did you encounter when adapting art assets for the system?
For characters it was actually quite difficult to edit or envision some of the rigs in their entirety as we only had a couple of final rigs in Softimage format. As I recall we only had Sophie as a full-jointed model. Generally, if you wanted to see an animated character you had to view it in game, or for reference on one of the arcade machines that we had sitting next to the office kitchen. Most of the time when working on character assets we just worked on one piece at a time, such as a thigh or a lower leg and at times it was hard to even work out the orientation of these elements. Not an ideal set up.

For the Saturn we had to chop down the meshes severely, and by today standards would appear primitive. Only the bosses had any reasonable level of detail as they were the only characters on screen so Paul had a bit more memory to play with. To save on polygon counts we also made just about all effects, such as explosions and blood splats, sprites and all textures were cut down to 4-bit palettes.

Level maps were a bit more straightforward and were mainly a case of crunching polys and removing doubled up faces and floating polys that were using alphas on the arcade version. For us, just about every background mesh had to be a one-piece item with polys running in efficient strips. Another factor was the arcade ROM used a greyscale set of textures which were then tinted in code. When it came to reduce these for the Saturn and then hand-colour or tint them we knew we'd have our hands full to make them look good. Some worked, some didn't.

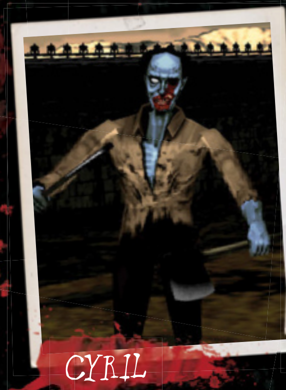
One cannot deny the groundwork done on previous titles by Tantalus engine programmer, Shane Stevens and director/tools programmer Andrew Bailey who had some funky custom-made tools named after pigs, don't ask me why! Most of the crunching was done on Andrew's tools, along with Dpaint for textures in the good old days of pixel-pushing!

Over the years, people have speculated that the Saturn game wasn't finished upon release. Is there any truth to those rumours?
That's a new one to me. The schedule was tight but never was it brought to our attention that we missed milestones and we didn't drop tools before we completed the game. In fact, early on in production Perfect shipped artists over heading toward the crunch. Corners had to be cut perhaps with quality in the sense we had little time for polish, but that's different from calling it unfinished. I've spent over 20 years in the industry and both budget and scheduling were a huge factor then and it's no different now.

» [Saturn] "Why Samson, your polygon reduction surgery has gone beautifully!"



PERFECT POLYGONS



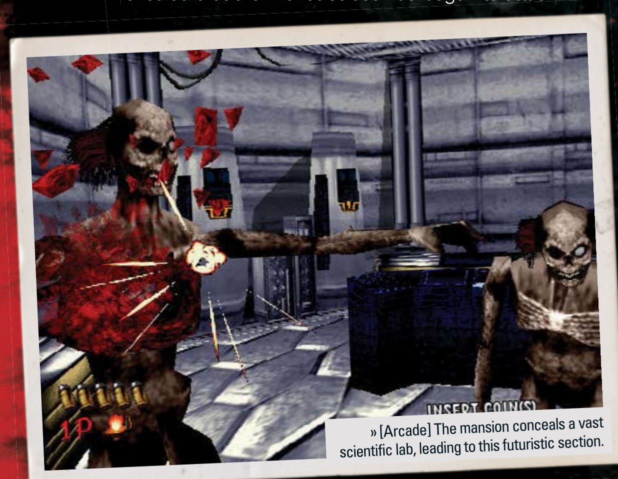






▶ like ghosts, and the protagonists were deliberately older than the teenagers and young adults so frequently featured in Japanese games. The resulting game would be known as *The House Of The Dead*.

The setup for the game is standard horror fare. On the 18th December 1998, AMS agent Thomas Rogan receives a distressed phone call from his fiancée Sophie Richards, a researcher for DBR Corporation – a shadowy scientific research company located within the Curien Mansion. Dr Roy Curien, the owner of the mansion and DBR Corporation's research director, has gone mad and unleashed the results of his experiments – a horde of the undead! Sophie's call revealed that the monstrosities had begun to attack



» [Arcade] The mansion conceals a vast scientific lab, leading to this futuristic section.



> "Scanning through the folders we came across some working files and other hidden characters that never made the final cut"
> Warren Hawkes



» [Arcade] These cyborg zombie enemies are a right pain – they're quick and can fire their claws at you.

and kill the laboratory staff. Alongside the mysterious Agent G, Rogan's job is to head to the mansion and stop Curien, as well as rescuing any survivors he comes across.

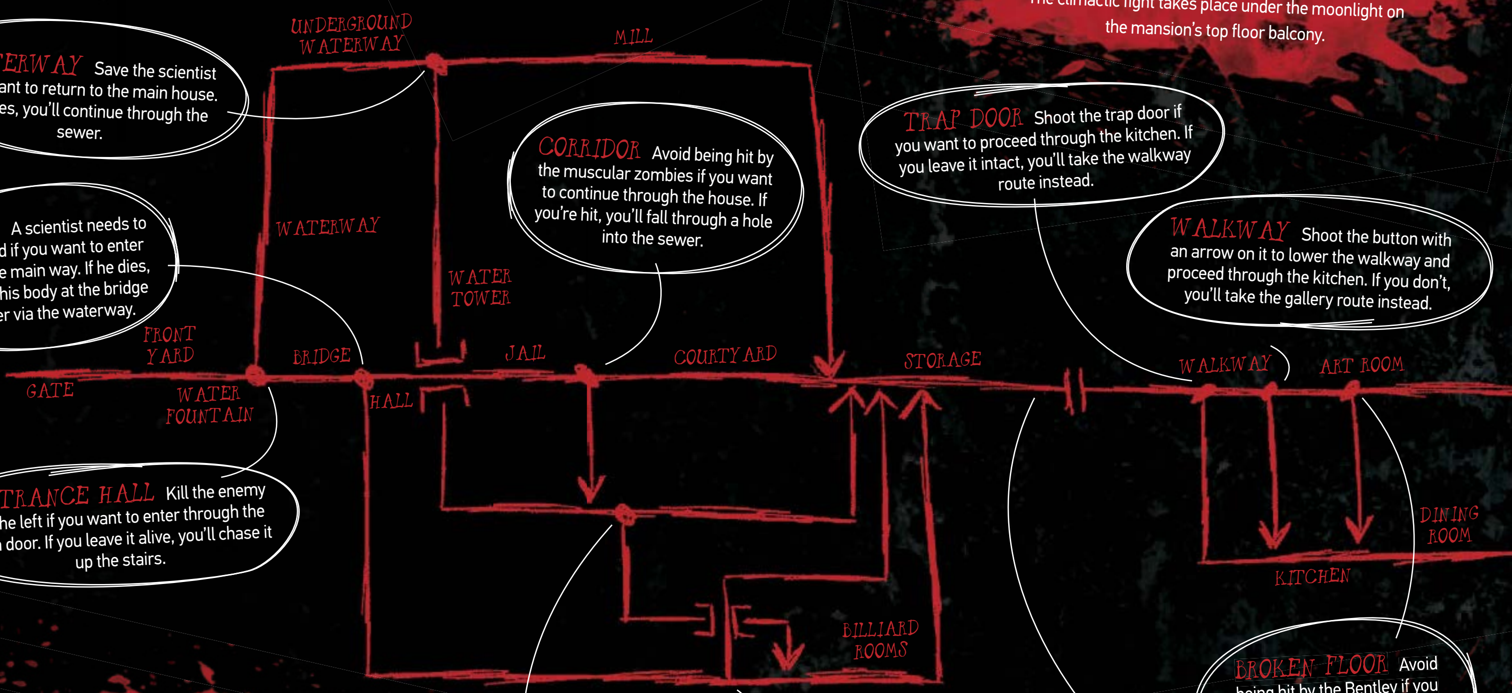
The theme allowed *The House Of The Dead* to stand apart from Sega's other gun games. *Virtua Cop* was all about precision and accuracy, while *Gunblade NY* offered a machine gun and unbridled carnage. By featuring zombies as enemies, AM1 could offer the best of both worlds. The rotting corpses might have made for bigger targets than the average *Virtua Cop* gangster as they shambled towards the screen, but they made up for it with their inhuman resilience – most enemies in the game are capable of withstanding a few hits, meaning that your pistol's six shots were emptied and reloaded far quicker. However, accuracy was still important – headshots were the quickest way to take down a foe, and you could blow individual limbs clean off with a well-placed shot. Skilful players could even use this to their advantage to save themselves from attack, for example by shooting a zombie's arm off just before it swung at your with a hatchet.

This was the gory genius of *The House Of The Dead*, as the game didn't just allow you to gruesomely dismember your foes – it actively encouraged it through the game mechanics. The game really pushed the limits of what was acceptable, too. The zombies could have holes punched through them, bones protruded from the stumps where limbs used to exist, and undead heads could even be completely shattered – more often than not resulting in a stray flying eyeball. However, the buckets of blood and over-the-top violence were hard to take too seriously, as *The House Of The Dead*'s other key feature is its B-movie charm. No matter who was speaking, lines were delivered by actors who seemingly had no context for what they were reading, leading to a bizarre atmosphere matched only by low-budget splatter horror films.

Of course, some people predictably took exception to the game's graphic violence. In the most notable case, the American city of Indianapolis passed an ordinance requiring that violent arcade games were placed behind a partition through which they could not be seen, and that any minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to play them. *The House Of The Dead* was one of the games it had taken the strongest exception to, and it became a key point of contention in the court case brought against the city by the American Amusement Machine Assocation. Appeal judge Richard Posner wasn't convinced that the game required restriction on the basis of obscenity or psychological harm, with his decision noting that "*The House of the Dead* depicts zombies being killed flamboyantly, with much severing of limbs and effusion of blood; but so stylized and patently fictitious is the cartoon-like depiction that no one would suppose ▶

GUIDED TOUR

Curien Mansion is big, and you won't see it all in a single play. Here's a map so you can see all the sights



WATERWAY Save the scientist if you want to return to the main house. If he dies, you'll continue through the sewer.

BRIDGE A scientist needs to be rescued if you want to enter through the main way. If he dies, you'll find his body at the bridge and enter via the waterway.

ENTRANCE HALL Kill the enemy on the left if you want to enter through the main door. If you leave it alive, you'll chase it up the stairs.

CORRIDOR Avoid being hit by the muscular zombies if you want to continue through the house. If you're hit, you'll fall through a hole into the sewer.

TRAP DOOR Shoot the trap door if you want to proceed through the kitchen. If you leave it intact, you'll take the walkway route instead.

WALKWAY Shoot the button with an arrow on it to lower the walkway and proceed through the kitchen. If you don't, you'll take the gallery route instead.

BROKEN FLOOR Avoid being hit by the Bentley if you want to continue on the upper floor. If you're hit, you'll fall to the bar.

STAIRWAY Shoot away the debris to return to the main house via the stairs. If you don't, you'll have to make your way back through the courtyard.

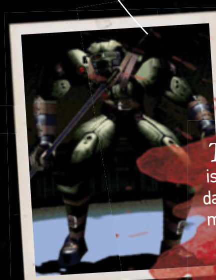
BALCONY Avoid being hit by the muscular zombies if you want to continue along the balcony. If you're hit, you'll fall off the balcony and continue through the courtyard.

CHAPTER 1: TRAGEDY

■ Starting off at the entrance in the mansion's grounds, your goal here is to get inside the building and rescue Sophie. Depending on your choices, you'll either bust in through the front door and fight through the run-down hallways, or fend off mouldy creatures as you journey through the underground waterway.

CHAPTER 2: REVENGE

■ If you can make your way through the gallery or the kitchen and dining areas, you'll start to discover the secret of the mansion – a huge scientific research lab, which houses some of Curien's deadlier experiments. The climactic fight takes place under the moonlight on the mansion's top floor balcony.



THE CHARIOT This colossus is almost impervious to your shots. To damage it, you'll have to hit the glowing mark on its chest. After taking enough damage, The Chariot will shed its armour and expose its fragile flesh.

CONVERSION CAPERS

Despite its arcade success, The House Of The Dead has seen very few home conversions. Let's look at both of them…

SATURN 1998

■ Being one of the Saturn's few major releases for 1998, *The House Of The Dead* came under a lot of scrutiny and generally held up pretty well. The gameplay is more or less identical, with camera movements, animations and more matching up well with the original. There's a noticeable downgrade in the quality of 3D models and textures though, and occasional mid-level loading screens. As a game that arrived late in the life of the Saturn, *The House Of The Dead* has massive regional pricing differences – a Japanese copy can be had for as little as £5, a PAL copy will set you back £30 or more, and the North American version will wreck your wallet to the tune of at least £100.



PC 1998

■ Just like the Saturn conversion, *The House Of The Dead* for PC was handled by Tantalus. As a result, the game is substantially similar to its console counterpart, with the 3D models and camera direction being indistinguishable from each other. The PC version does benefit from high-res textures and a better frame-rate, as well as stages that are uninterrupted by loading screens. It does lack the pseudo-transparent mesh effect of the Saturn game, and only supports mouse controls. The good news is that if you want to pick up this version, it was kept available for years on a variety of labels. As a result, the game is readily available and can be picked up for as little as £1.



THE HANGEDMAN You can shoot it to lower its health, but if you're aiming for a high score you may want to shoot bats for a while. Once it starts to attack you, it'll swoop in from the edges of the screen – blast it in the chest for victory.



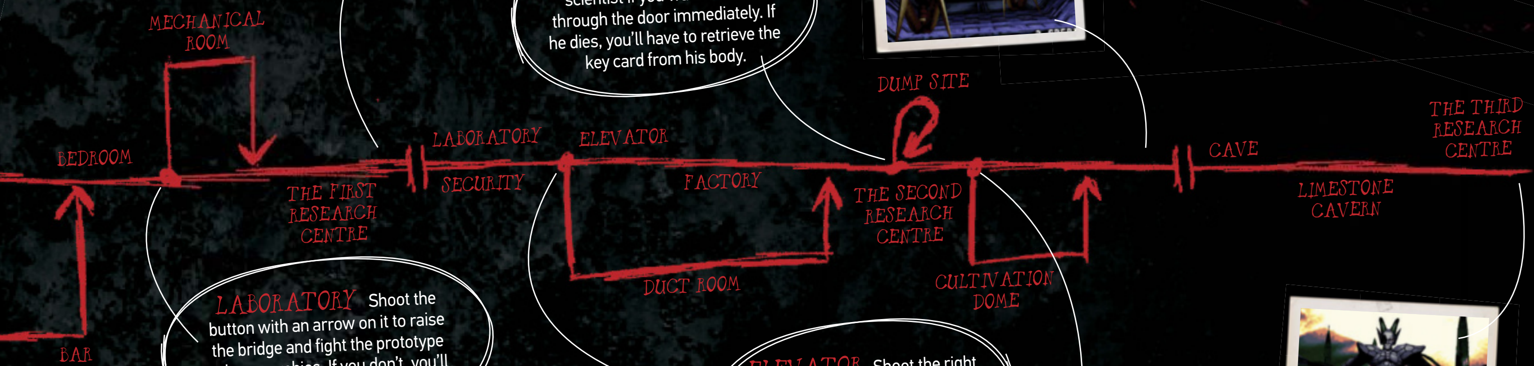
THE HERMIT It'll attempt to swipe at you with its legs, but you can fend off its attacks with well-aimed shots to the head. After taking some punishment, it'll fire webs at you. Shoot the webs out of the air and blast the head some more.



CHAPTER 4: THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

■ There's no way out and no alternative route, here. The cavern is guarded by two familiar foes, The Chariot and The Hangedman – they're both as tough as before, and have the same attack patterns. Once they're dispatched, it's time for the fight against Curien's true masterpiece.

DUMP SITE Save the scientist if you want to enter through the door immediately. If he dies, you'll have to retrieve the key card from his body.



LABORATORY Shoot the button with an arrow on it to raise the bridge and fight the prototype cyborg zombies. If you don't, you'll jump down and fight regular ones.

ELEVATOR Shoot the right elevator button if you want to proceed via the underground duct room. If you don't, you'll proceed through a factory site.



CHAPTER 3: TRUTH

■ Now you're deep into the labs, where almost nothing remains of the mansion façade. Instead you'll find lots of mechanical equipment, and enemies to match – expect to see the cyborgs here, including Moody and Parlor. You'll also see Harris frequently, swinging his trademark wrecking ball from afar.

STEEL DOOR Shoot the left door repeatedly you want to take the upper path through the cultivation dome. If you don't, you'll take the lower path instead.

THE MAGICIAN This android is fast and its spinning attacks launch fireballs at you. Aim for its cables to damage it. After a while it'll start charging at you with a swipe, but you can interrupt it by hitting its weak spot.

▶ it 'obscene' in the sense in which a photograph of a person being decapitated might be described as 'obscene.' It will not turn anyone's stomach."

> "For the Saturn we had to chop down the meshes severely, and by today standards it would appear primitive"
> Warren Hawkes

Thankfully, the appeal of *The House Of The Dead* went way beyond its violence, as it was a game packed full of replay value. For a start, extra lives and bonus score items could be found around each stage, housed in destructible boxes, vases and the like. However, the real long-term appeal of the game was found in its multitude of alternative paths. At a variety of points throughout the game, you can make choices that will alter the route you take through the mansion – be that failing to save a scientist, managing to shoot a switch to raise a bridge, or simply being knocked down a hole. Taking these routes brought you into contact with brand-new enemies and offered different scoring opportunities. For many players, finding a favourite route is a major part of the fun.

For other players, the major highlight of the game comes from the boss encounters, each named after cards in Tarot's Major Arcana. These saw AM1 at its most inventive, dropping the standard zombies and instead featuring some far more disturbing creatures including an armoured mutant armed with a huge bardiche, a demonic winged beast and a gigantic spider. These encounters were tense and often difficult, which can leave a player low on life for the next stage if they haven't saved enough survivors.

Strong earnings quickly established *The House Of The Dead* as one of Sega's most popular arcade games upon its release in 1997, and home conversions to the Saturn and PC quickly followed. The company also set about extending the game into a series. As well as three straight arcade sequels and a console-exclusive prequel, the series has seen spin-offs including *The House Of The Dead EX*, *The Typing Of The Dead*, *The Pinball Of The Dead* and *Zombie Revenge*. You'll also find the series represented in crossover games like *Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed* and *Project X Zone*, as well as action figures and even a couple of films (although fans like to forget those).

Despite all of that success, Sega hasn't made *The House Of The Dead* available on modern home platforms, so your only way of playing it is to seek out the original arcade game or the old conversions. It's an odd situation, especially considering that you can pick up all three of its sequels on consoles as recent as the Wii and PlayStation 3. Still, it seems rather fitting that you have to indulge in a little digital necromancy to enjoy this classic, don't you think? *


NINTENDO
GAMECUBE

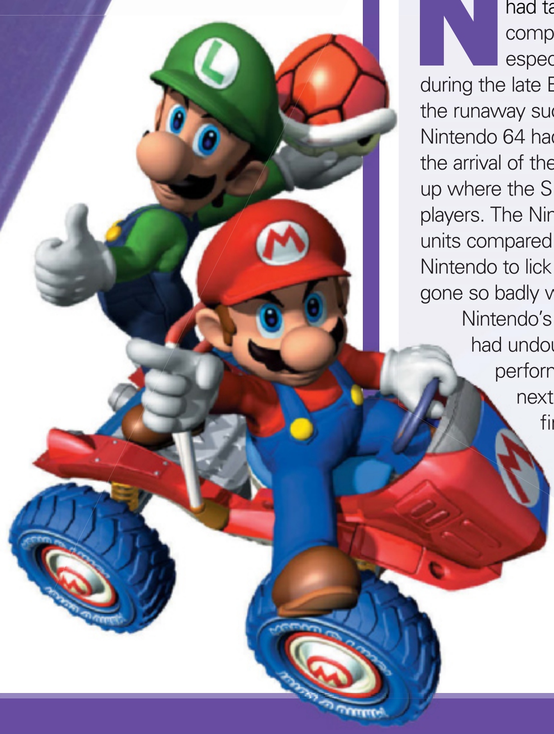






NINTENDO GAMECUBE

As the boxy wonder turns 15, Damien McFerran takes a look back at the system which struggled against the PS2 and Xbox but established the foundations for Nintendo's juggernaut, the Wii



Nintendo's standing in the videogame industry had taken something of a knock when the company began work on the GameCube, especially when compared to its glory days during the late Eighties and early Nineties. Following the runaway success of both the NES and SNES, the Nintendo 64 had been bullied into second place by the arrival of the PlayStation, a system which picked up where the SNES left off in the eyes of many players. The Nintendo 64 went on to sell 33 million units compared to the PlayStation's 102 million, forcing Nintendo to lick its wounds and ponder just what had gone so badly wrong.

Nintendo's insistence on sticking with cartridges had undoubtedly contributed to the N64's poor performance, and it was decided that the next console would use optical discs – a first for the company. Nintendo was also keen to ensure that its new system would offer decent power at a reasonable price, thereby attracting third-party support without driving away customers with a lofty price tag. To this end, Nintendo partnered with graphics hardware design company ArtX – led by Dr. Wei Yen, who was previously Silicon Graphics' head of Nintendo Operations and had worked on the N64 – and began development on 'Flipper', the graphics processor which would power Project Dolphin, the early codename for the GameCube. The CPU was the other piece of the puzzle, and Nintendo would team up with IBM for the GameCube's brain, codenamed 'Gekko'.

"Coming from working on the N64, when we first saw the GameCube we were impressed by the step up in power," says Phil Tossell, who worked at Rare – a studio which had a storied partnership with Nintendo – during this period. "The N64 was a limited machine, particularly with respect to the size and amount of textures you were able to use. At the same time we were wary of the shift from cartridge to disc. At the time we were working on *Dinosaur*

NINTENDO GAMECUBE






Planet – which would transition to the GameCube and become *Star Fox Adventures* – and that utilised a streaming world, so we knew that getting that to work with a disc setup was going to be a real challenge."

The GameCube arrived on store shelves towards the end of 2001 and was accompanied by three games in Japan and 12 in North America – none of which had Mario in them, although his sibling took the spotlight in the enjoyable *Luigi's Mansion*. This ghost-busting adventure may have been the title that true-blood Nintendo fans flocked to at launch, but it was Factor 5's excellent *Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader* which truly sold the machine to the masses. It offered the most convincing replication of George Lucas' epic series yet seen in videogame form, allowing players to step into their very own X-wing and play out all of their childhood fantasies. The fact that a third-party studio was able to produce something so polished at launch was a testament to accessibility of the system. "On the whole, the GameCube was very enjoyable to develop for," says Phil. "The range of effects we were able to achieve due to the multi-stage configurable graphics pipeline was remarkable. This pipeline was like an N64 on steroids – N64 had two stages, the GameCube had 16, if memory serves me right – and was a precursor to the fully-programmable graphics cards that were appearing on PCs."

The console's controller was also unique. While it moved away from the three-pronged approach of N64 pad, the GameCube controller still offered innovations of its own. The large A button was easy to reach, while the shoulder buttons offered analogue and digital support; a slight push triggered the analogue input while depressing them fully activated the digital command. Nintendo also added a second analogue stick, the C-Stick, which would be primarily used for camera control. "Almost everybody at Rare loved the controller," Phil says. "It still rates as one of best controllers of all time for me."

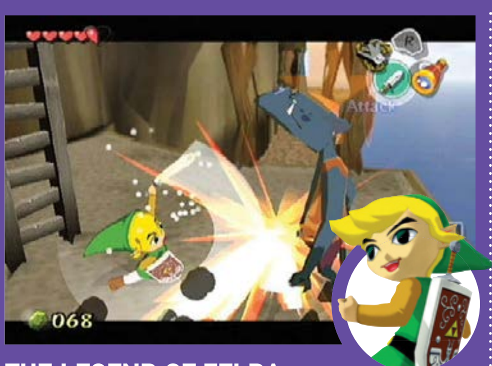


» [GameCube] *Resident Evil 4* was intended to be a GameCube-exclusive title, however it made an appearance on the PS2.

Nintendo was keen to leave no stone unturned when it came to designing the GameCube, but there were some limitations. "The downsides were that it was severely constrained on memory," Phil says. "It only had 24MB of main memory with 16MB of so-called audio memory. Although the GameCube supported texture compression it wasn't appropriate for all textures. Fortunately, Rare's artists were already very adept at making using of smaller textures to great effect as the N64 permitted only tiny textures by comparison. The other downside was the disc. It was pretty slow, in particular with the seek time, so it was necessary to spin it up in plenty of time for when the data would actually need to be delivered. This was particularly tricky for *Star Fox Adventures* where we had taken advantage of the near-instantaneous access and transfer speed of cartridge ROM. It became a favourite pastime of testers to try and find ways to bypass or defeat the triggers set up to begin loading of the next section of a level to see if they could get it to visibly pop in or not appear at all!"

Having cut its teeth in the world of 3D with the N64, Nintendo was able to embrace the third dimension more freely thanks to the powerful

EVOLVING GAMES The Nintendo franchises that benefitted from the Cube's extra power



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

■ The GameCube was home to not one but two full-3D *Zelda* titles, with *Wind Waker* proving to be the most divisive of the pair upon its initial announcement. The gorgeous cel-shaded cartoon visuals and massive, water-based overworld didn't find favour with hardcore fans, but ironically the game is perhaps better regarded today than *Twilight Princess*, its successor. Both have been ported to the Wii U as HD updates since.



SUPER MARIO

■ *Super Mario Sunshine* wasn't the sequel to *Super Mario 64* that many had hoped for, but it harnessed the power of the GameCube to present a unique twist on the concept of Mario in three dimensions. Using his F.L.U.D.D. (Flash Liquidizer Ultra Dousing Device), Mario has to clean up the gorgeous Isle Delfino, which looks joyfully colourful, thanks to the sheer clout of Nintendo's sixth-generation powerhouse.



METROID

■ Coded by Retro Studios, *Metroid Prime* took the 2D template laid down by *Metroid* and *Super Metroid* but brought it into the third dimension, adopting a first-person view and placing focus on the scanning ability of Samus Aran's power suit. While the move away from 2D might have been brave, *Prime* was able to include the hallmarks of the series, such as inventive boss battles, the morph ball and the opportunity to explore your surroundings for secrets.



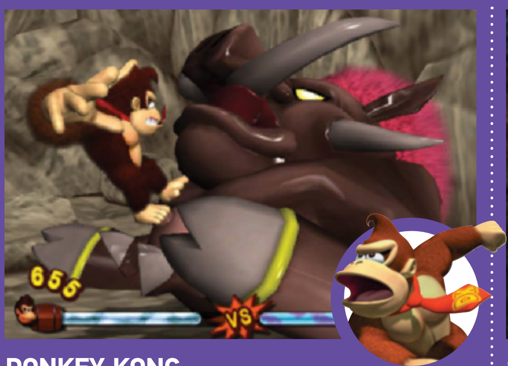


» [GameCube] *Wind Waker* introduced us to a new Link, a more cartoon-like, cel-shaded iteration of the hero.

GameCube hardware, and some of the company's most accomplished games can be found on Nintendo's system. *Super Mario Sunshine* built on the fine work seen in *Super Mario 64* while expanding the iconic plumber's repertoire by gifting him with the 'F.L.U.D.D.' water shooter, while *The Legend Of Zelda: Wind Waker* gave us cel-shaded Link and a seemingly endless ocean world to explore. Elsewhere, *Pikmin* kickstarted an entirely new IP for the company and was to be Nintendo's take on the Real-Time Strategy genre. *Animal Crossing* was equally influential, delivering a 'life simulation' which was bursting with charm. Elsewhere, existing franchises such as *Mario Kart*, *Smash Bros.* and *Metroid* all benefitted from timely updates. *Metroid Prime* in particular was a significant release, taking the series into the realm of 3D and paving the way for a trilogy that scored highly in critical and commercial terms alike.

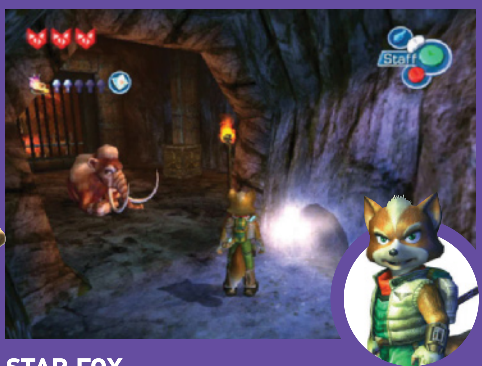


"The range of effects we were able to achieve due to the multi-stage configurable graphics pipeline was remarkable"
Phil Tossell



DONKEY KONG

■ While many of Nintendo's franchises were taken to new levels on the GameCube, *Donkey Kong* received the most surprising upgrade. Instead of offering a platformer in the vein of *Donkey Kong Country* or *Donkey Kong 64*, *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat* mixed platforming with music. It was compatible with the DK Bongos, which had launched alongside *Donkey Konga* in 2003. Progress was achieved by tapping the drums and clapping in time with the music.



STAR FOX

■ Fox McCloud appeared twice (not counting *Smash Bros.*) on the CameCube. *Star Fox Adventures* – the final game to be developed by Rare before it was purchased by Microsoft – boasted some amazing visuals despite not being a traditional *Star Fox* outing. It remains one of the most technically impressive GameCube games, while *Star Fox Assault* returned to a traditional *Star Fox* formula, with space battles and four-player split-screen local multiplayer.



MARIO KART

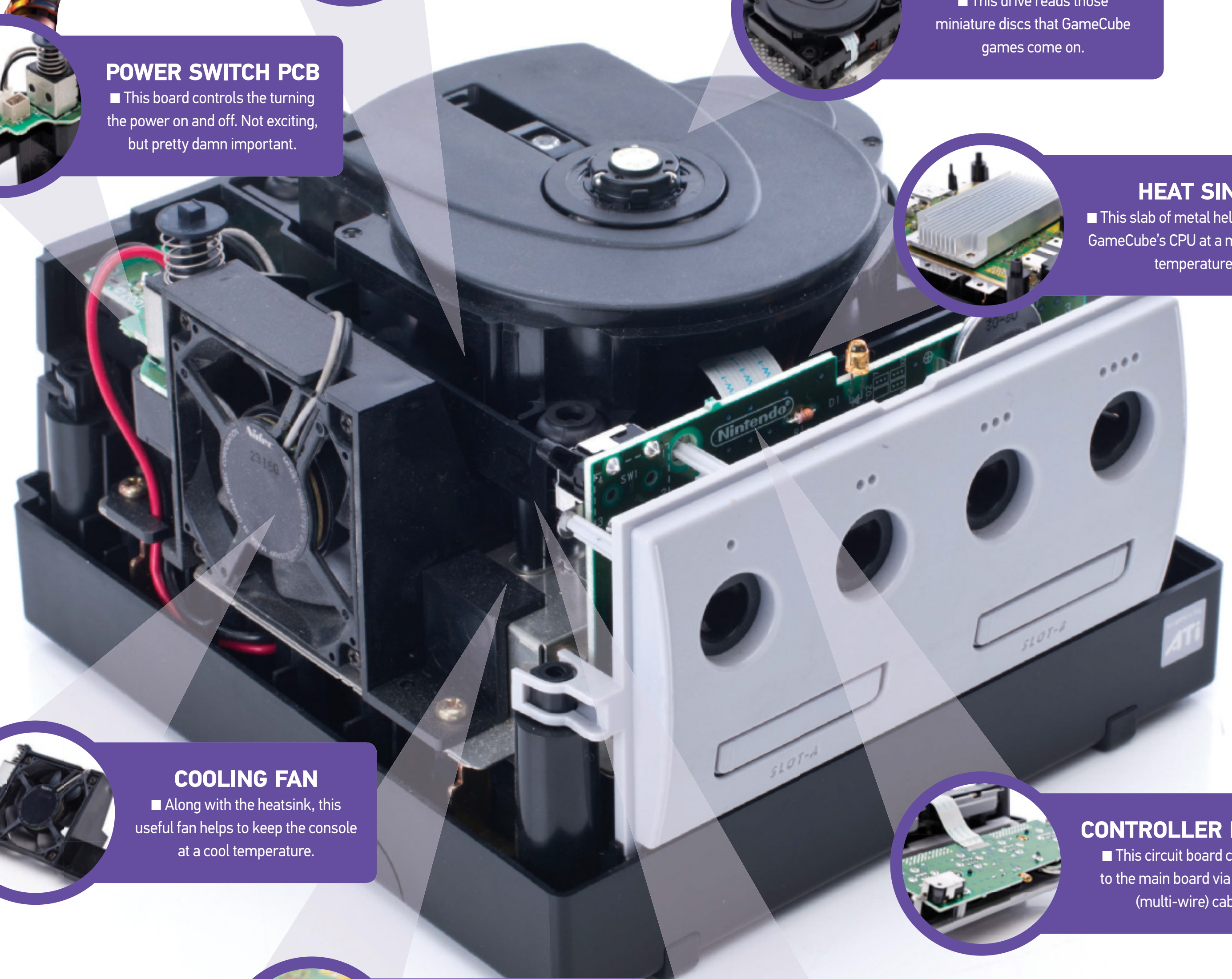
■ Many gamers were disappointed that *Mario Kart 64* used 2D sprites, but Nintendo really pulled out all the stops when it came to making its GameCube sequel shine. The karts in *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* – presented in full 3D this time – held two drivers at the same time, offering a co-op mode where one player drives and the player handles the weaponry and is able to perform a shove attack. A fun sequel with rubber banding being the only real bugbear.

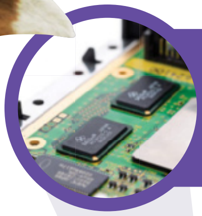
NINTENDO GAMECUBE



INSIDE THE CUBE

We take a peek under the hood of the plucky little console





24 MB MOSYS 1T-SRAM 'SPLASH' SYSTEM RAM

■ The is the main system memory.

DISC DRIVE

■ This drive reads those miniature discs that GameCube games come on.

POWER SWITCH PCB

■ This board controls the turning the power on and off. Not exciting, but pretty damn important.

HEAT SINK

■ This slab of metal helps keep the GameCube's CPU at a manageable temperature.

COOLING FAN

■ Along with the heatsink, this useful fan helps to keep the console at a cool temperature.

CONTROLLER BOARD

■ This circuit board connects to the main board via a ribbon (multi-wire) cable.



IBM GEKKO POWERPC CPU

■ The brains of the GameCube system, created by IBM and clocked at 485 MHz.



ATI FLIPPER (GPU)

■ This chip handles all of the visuals, and even does some of the sound too.



Second-party studios, like Rare, were also put to work on the GameCube, but the company didn't get the special treatment many assume it did. "I think people labour under the misconception that Rare had a lot of privileged access, but in reality we didn't," reveals Phil. "By and large it mostly translated into getting things like dev kits and SDK access before anybody else, but as far as making use of the hardware in the best way, we had to do that ourselves. Nintendo's documentation up until the GameCube was pretty terrible, and I think actually that one of the unmentioned things about the GameCube was that for the first time the documentation was actually really good. This made it easier to fully make use of all the available features of the hardware."

Rare's output on the GameCube may have been curtailed by the fact that it was sold to Microsoft in 2002, but the firm still managed to dazzle with its final release. "We ported the *Dinosaur Planet* engine onto the GameCube," explains Tossell. "We really rapidly ported it over and started integrating as many new graphical features as we could in a really short space of time. We had this little demo scene with a SharpClaw character setup with really nice lighting, texturing and projected shadows. When we showed Nintendo they were so impressed that they started asking why their graphics didn't look as good! *Star Fox Adventures* is still regarded as looking great, even now. Effects like fur, grass, and reflective and refractive water still hold up. I had the opportunity to travel to Kyoto to meet Miyamoto-san and Imamura-san. I'm not really a person that gets starstruck but it was an experience that will stick with me; sitting in design meetings discussing with these guys about what we should do with *Star Fox Adventures* is not something I'll forget."

"One of the unmentioned things about the GameCube was that for the first time the documentation was actually really good"
Phil Tossell



» [GameCube] Mario was missing in the GameCube launch lineup, his brother took centre stage with *Luigi's Mansion* instead.

Not every studio got that kind of treatment, of course, but Nintendo made an effort to make third parties feel more at home on the GameCube than they did on the N64. Initially, third-party support for the GameCube was robust, with many companies porting over their PlayStation 2 releases to Nintendo's machine thanks to the parity in power. Sega was an early supporter, with titles like *Crazy Taxi*, *Super Monkey Ball* and *Sonic Adventure 2* all finding a receptive audience on the GameCube – ironic when you consider that the two companies had been bitter rivals during previous few console generations. Capcom was another firm which bet big on the GameCube, announcing a series of exclusives such as *Viewtiful Joe*, *P.N.03*, *Resident Evil 4* and *Killer 7*. Making the fourth mainline *Resident Evil* title a GameCube exclusive was a massive vote of confidence from the developer, and for a time it seemed like Nintendo had overcome the issue of third-party support which had blighted the N64.

However, while Nintendo's own games sold well on the console, external publishers found less success. As



» [GameCube] *F-Zero GX* was a blisteringly-fast racing game that offered arcade-quality experiences on Nintendo's humble console.

it became apparent that the PlayStation 2 was to be the dominant system of the generation, support began to melt away. To make matters worse, Microsoft's Xbox – also launched in 2001 – had effectively stepped into second place by offering more raw power and functionality, pushing the GameCube even further down the pecking order. The only saving grace for Nintendo was that it remained second in its native Japan, where the Xbox had little impact.

The biggest blow would be Capcom's decision to backtrack on its promise to offer exclusive support to Nintendo's machine. *Viewtiful Joe* would gain rave reviews but only sold around 275,000 units, leading Capcom to port it to the PlayStation 2 in order to bolster profitability. The same would happen with *Resident Evil 4*, with Capcom bowing to fan pressure and confirming two months before it arrived on

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ESSENTIAL PERIPHERALS



GAME BOY PLAYER

■ One of the most appealing GameCube peripherals available for the system, the Game Boy Player bolted onto the bottom of the console and allow players to run their Game Boy Advance games on the machine.



HORI GAME BOY PLAYER CONTROLLER

■ Designed for use with the Game Boy Player and lacking many of the features of the standard pad, this retro peripheral works with many standard games, such as *Sonic Mega Collection*.



DK BONGOS

■ Compatible with the likes of *Donkey Konga*, *Donkey Konga 2*, *Donkey Konga 3* and *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*, the DK Bongos controller has to rate as one of the most unusual, yet surprisingly functional, peripherals in the history of gaming.



MEMORY CARD

■ Unlike modern hard drive-based systems the GameCube required a memory card to save data. *Animal Crossing* and *Pokémon Colosseum* – two titles which have large save files – shipped with a dedicated memory card in the game box.



MICROPHONE

■ Compatible with *Mario Party 6*, *Mario Party 7*, *Karaoke Revolution Party*, *Odama* and *Densetsu No Quiz Ou Ketteisen*, the GameCube microphone allowed players to interact with games using their voice to issue commands.



WAVEBIRD

■ The WaveBird offered wireless gaming a generation before Sony and Microsoft. A small receiver plugs into the joypad port on the console, while the pad itself has an operational range of around 20 feet.



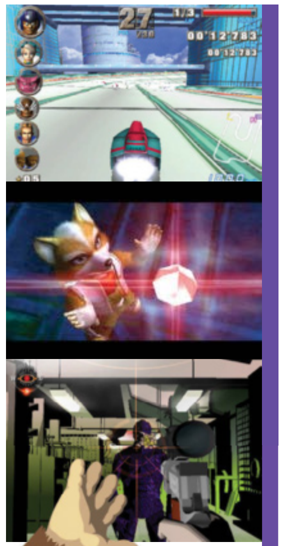
ASCII KEYBOARD CONTROLLER

■ This looks like someone has snapped a GameCube pad in two and stuck the halves onto either end of a keyboard. Despite this look, it was useful for inputting text in *Phantasy Star Online*.



LINK CABLE

■ Many titles – such as *The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* – allowed players to connect Game Boy Advance consoles to their GameCube systems to unlock additional features – such as second-screen gameplay.





» [GameCube] *Mario Kart Double Dash!!* flaunted the GameCube's ability to kickstart any local-multiplayer session with ease.

▶ the GameCube that the survival horror outing would also be coming to Sony's console at a later date, an announcement which seriously undermined sales of the Nintendo version. In the end, the only title out of the fabled 'Capcom Five' to remain GameCube exclusive was *P.N.03* – the fifth game, *Dead Phoenix*, was cancelled in 2003 and Suda51's *Killer7* launched on the GameCube and PlayStation 2 at the same time. Capcom's commitment to the GameCube had been a massive shot in the arm for Nintendo and seemed to suggest that the console was more than capable of giving the PS2 a run for its money in terms of sales figures, but by going back on the deal, the publisher dealt a blow to the GameCube's fortunes, as well as its standing in the eyes of the games industry. PlayStation 2 owners had little reason to invest in Nintendo's system when titles like *Resident Evil 4* were coming to their console anyway, and this move robbed the GameCube of the momentum it crucially needed to attract more buyers.





» [GameCube] *Mario Sunshine* didn't hit the acclaim of *Mario 64*, but it was still a commendable, and great-looking, platformer.



> **"Developers simply weren't willing to spend the time and money to port their games over to the GameCube"**
> Phil Tossell

The GameCube's eventual install base totalled around 22 million units, way behind the PlayStation 2's 153 million and a shade behind the Xbox's 24 million. As is often the case, a combination of factors contributed to its lackluster performance, but some stand out more than others. "I believe the GameCube struggled because there just wasn't the variety of content," says Phil. "The Xbox and PS2 were largely comparable power-wise and many developers simply weren't willing to spend the time and money to port their games over to the GameCube for the relatively small returns. Nintendo were left to support the console all on their own and it just wasn't enough for a wider audience."

While the GameCube appeared to be the next step in Nintendo's downward trajectory – following the N64 which sold 33 million compared to the 49 million units of its forerunner, the SNES – it would lay down the framework for Nintendo's most successful home console ever, and that is perhaps its most enduring legacy. Despite its innovative motion-sensing control system, 2005's Wii was an evolution of the GameCube in purely technical terms, boasting the same core components. It would go on to sell over 100 million units, despite the fact that both the PS3 and Xbox 360 were significantly more powerful and offered impressive HD visuals.

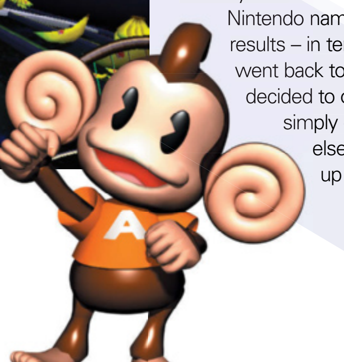
While the GameCube failed to place Nintendo on top during its active life, its eye-catching design, extensive range of unique peripherals and – perhaps most important of all – its selection of excellent first-party Nintendo releases have ensured that in recent times it has enjoyed something of a modest resurgence among collectors. The console's unique Japanese software packaging – which consists of a small, clear plastic case with a card sleeve – makes it incredibly appealing for import buyers, while the bright orange 'Spice' variant of the system and the super-exclusive Panasonic Q fetch respectable prices online. Overall, the GameCube is actually one of the more affordable retro systems when it comes to collecting, and it's possible to purchase a console and a selection of good games for a price that won't leave your wallet feeling too empty. Expect that to change over the next few years as its popularity increases, though.

The GameCube may have been overshadowed by its commercially-successful successor, but while the Wii was an underpowered, left-field champion, the GameCube marked the last time that Nintendo truly tried to fight on even technological terms with its rivals and balk to industry trends and offer something that was deemed more 'safe' and 'mainstream'. When it came to raw power it was more than a match for the PlayStation 2 and Xbox, but this parity and the Nintendo name simply wasn't enough to bring results – in terms of sales, at least. Nintendo went back to the drawing board for the Wii and decided to offer players an experience which simply couldn't be replicated anywhere else, and that ethos has continued right up to the present day. *





» [GameCube] Sega made a home for itself on its former rival's console.



WHAT MADE IT GREAT



UNIQUE DISCS
■ The proprietary optical discs were designed to deter piracy.



COMPACT CASING
■ The GameCube was refreshingly compact and even had a carry handle.



FOUR PORTS
■ The GameCube was perfect for parties, all you needed was the controllers.

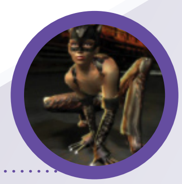


PARITY OF POWER
■ Despite its small size, the Cube could match its rivals.



UNIQUE COMPATIBILITY
■ You could play GBA, GBC and original Game Boy games via a special adapter.

WHERE IT FAILED



POOR THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT
■ Nintendo failed to secure consistent third-party deals.



SMALL DISC CAPACITY
■ 1.5GB games were modest, but the rivals had more space.



TOO FOCUSED ON THE FAMILY
■ The design was seen by some as too kid-friendly.



NOT ENOUGH ONLINE
■ It didn't support the online console gaming scene enough.



NO INTERNAL STORAGE
■ The GameCube's memory cards were a mess.



GLENN CORPES

His work can be found on anything from the Amiga to your mobile. Kim Justice has tracked him down and he's ready to talk about his career…

Over the course of his career, the building blocks laid by Glenn Corpes have contributed to many famous games. A builder of engines, as well as a graphics coder, artist, level designer, game designer and everything inbetween, Glenn is most famous for the time he spent at Bullfrog, where he cocreated *Populous* with Peter Molyneux, coded the 3D for *Powermonger* and built the engines for *Magic Carpet* and *Dungeon Keeper* – the latter game's engine being an inspiration for *Minecraft*. He is also one of the cofounders of the cult studio Lost Toys, and has worked at the likes of EA and Kuju. Today, he is still hammering away in the industry as an indie developer. We join him at his home in Guildford, where he is working on his latest game – the wonderfully-titled *Fat Owl With A Jetpack*.



» [Amiga] *Fusion*, one of the first games Glenn worked on at Bullfrog, didn't sell enough copies for a single royalty payment.

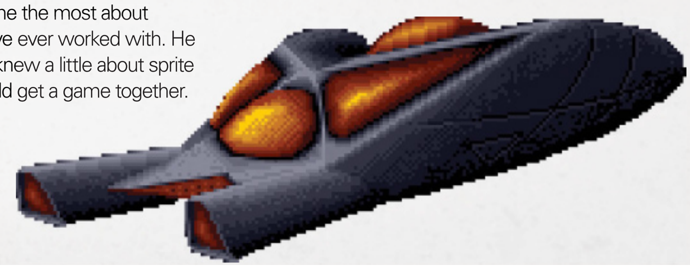
What was your first experience of a videogame?
I remember going to seaside arcades as the first videogames were introduced… lots of driving through paths of white dots. I also had, and still have, one of those Binatone things with paddles – they're worth all of 20 quid! At school they had some Commodore PETs, so I started playing around with those during my free periods. Then I bought a ZX81 and it ran out of memory after five minutes, so I had to scrounge £50 from my parents to order the 16K memory pack, which remains the most expensive memory I've ever bought! Imagine how much a gigabyte would have cost…

How did you first meet up with Peter Molyneux?
I used to hang around a games shop in Guildford called Ultima, and one of the people who I often talked to there was Kevin Donkin, who worked for Taurus – a company that was doing a database (Acquisition) for the Amiga. After wearing him down, he got me an interview – and that's how I met Peter Molyneux, who'd coded the database along with Kevin. He talked about how they were going to be changing the company and doing videogames, but they didn't have any programming vacancies as they were fully staffed up with him and Kevin! But they didn't have an artist, so they asked me to draw a plank of wood in Deluxe Paint… and that's how I ended up getting a job at Bullfrog.

What was it like working with Peter?
We were good mates back then. I'd be out on the piss often with Peter, Les Edgar and Kevin, brainstorming… in the first few years of Bullfrog, everyone was just a bunch of single nerds who were really into games and Peter liked it that way – he was shocked when he found out that Paul McLaughlin was married! But Peter's probably the programmer who taught me the most about programming out of anyone I've ever worked with. He took me from someone who knew a little about sprite routines to someone who could get a game together.

What was the inspiration behind the landscaping routine in *Populous*?
I was inspired by *Spindizzy*'s graphics. I created a set of isometric blocks on the Atari ST and started randomly splatting them down on the screen, which was working but I couldn't be bothered with writing an editor. Instead, I wrote a landscape generator that used the blocks I'd made, and you could change the value of the corner of each block in order to raise or lower the land. I then tied the joystick to this command, which allowed me to create flat areas of the land and make it look a little more realistic. I did this over the course of a bank holiday weekend, after which I had the book drawn in the top left, and the grid of blocks that I'd made only without the coastline. Half of the pixels that you see in a game of *Populous* came from stuff that I'd drawn in those first three days, which is mental. Peter said that we had to get this onto the Amiga, which we did very simply, although I don't quite remember how – it had something to do with not harnessing the Amiga's blitter. It was, in many ways, more of a dodgy Atari ST port than we liked to admit!

It's funny how one of the Amiga's most famous games owes its existence to the Atari ST…
People also assumed that the Amiga version of *Populous* was a 32-colour game, but the colour palette was actually stolen out of *Dungeon Master*, which had 16 colours – a brilliant colour palette that we took from the character editor. One review of the game even explicitly said that it was so great to see a game that was 32 colours instead of just being a dodgy Atari ST port. *Populous* wasn't even faster on the Amiga than it was on the ST – it should have been but we didn't end up using the blitter.





"[Populous] was, in many ways, more of a dodgy ST port than we liked to admit!" Glenn Corpes

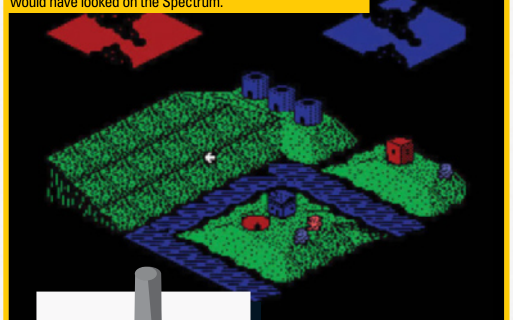


SELECTED TIMELINE

GLENN CORPES

- **Druid II** [Amiga/ST] 1988
- **Fusion** [Amiga/ST] 1988
- **Populous** [Amiga/ST] 1989
- **Powermonger** [Amiga/ST] 1990
- **Flood** [Amiga/ST] 1990
- **Populous II** [Amiga/PC] 1991
- **Syndicate** [Amiga/PC] 1993
- **Magic Carpet** [PC/PlayStation] 1994
- **Magic Carpet 2** [PC/PlayStation] 1995
- **Hi-Octane** [PC/PlayStation] 1995
- **Syndicate Wars** [PC/PlayStation] 1996
- **Dungeon Keeper** [PC] 1997
- **Ball Breakers** [PlayStation] 2000
- **Battle Engine Aquila** [Xbox/PS2] 2003
- **Ground Effect** [iOS] 2009
- **Topia** [iOS/Android] 2014
- **Fat Owl With A Jetpack** [Mac/iOS] 2016

» [ZX Spectrum] Glenn's 1991 mock-up of how *Populous* would have looked on the Spectrum.



Peter's mentioned you and him used to test the game every night, and then he'd make changes to the game that gave him an advantage.
Me and Peter would program all day, we would stop at about six in the evening and play it for a few hours in multiplayer – there was no single-player at all, just the 'Custom Game' option. We'd tweak it and play it constantly – he was basically trying to tune the computer opponent so that it could beat me. Then we'd have a pint down the pub and talk about it, and that was our life for about two months. Around this time, Peter had a hard disk crash and we had to rebuild the code from the last source version on the ST – which had virtually none of the game in it. Peter had to recreate it all over a couple of weeks while I was getting *Fusion* on the ST through EA's QA, which was 95 per cent waiting – so I sat there next to him and we effectively buddy coded it for that period, me looking at his screen and spotting typos, making suggestions. It's Peter's code, but I sat there with my feet up watching him type for those few weeks.

While he's drenched with sweat…
Yeah, 'You missed a semicolon up there!' [laughs]. Buddy coding really does work, although I've probably spent about three days doing it since then.

***Populous* was demonstrated to the press in the form of a Lego model. Whose idea was that, and what was the model's fate?**
That came about after a few interviews – Peter had the idea of making a model of the landscape and pretending that was how it was designed. I didn't feel too great about that because it was bullshit and it took the credit away from me, but it was duly made and photographed. I don't know what happened to it, but when I had a desk at 22cans and they were working on *Godus*, Peter asked me to do the same thing! He smashed it up as part of a Kickstarter video and poured ketchup all over it. I don't feel too bad about the whole thing now that Peter has admitted that the game wasn't really designed on Lego, but it's interesting what sticks around!

What was the reaction to the success of *Populous* at Bullfrog? How aware of it were you and the team?
We knew we had something special. I remember going to EA to speak to an Atari ST magazine, and we had two things to show – *Populous*, and the ST version of *Fusion*. The guy said that he'd make notes so he could remember which game was which, and I said something rather arrogant like, 'You'll remember which game's which!' (laughs), but in the pub he said that I was right about that. So we knew that people were excited about it, but we didn't know how it was going to do. Les used to have a pullout of the Gallup charts papering his office showing that *Populous* had spent seven weeks at number one in the overall charts, which was very good for an ST/Amiga title at that time.

Do you have any memories of working on the 3D in *Powermonger*?
I was using the book *Fundamentals of Interactive Computer Graphics*, which was the bible back then. The geomapping was done with very little reference to anything except that one book, and it was the first time I'd done 3D in assembler. It was interesting, but slightly depressing to see just how slow and incapable the Amiga or ST was of doing that stuff… 1990 was too early to play around with 3D at that level, but making it was fun. It was quite tough on Peter, though, especially as he'd just done the PC port for *Populous* entirely on his own, which belies the question as to whether he's a good programmer or just a wacky creative genius.

It's funny how that's become part of his image…
Peter gets into coding every now and then, but less so as his company gets bigger. He was the programming guy and I was the graphics coding guy – he did almost everything aside from the visuals on those games.

What was different about the making of *Populous II* compared with the original?
We wrote it in assembler – which was a futile exercise as we could have achieved the same results doing what



FIVE TO PLAY
The games of Glenn that you need to play



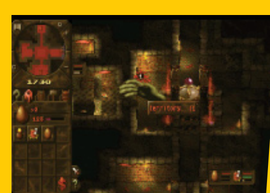
POPULOUS 1989
■ Glenn arguably made his biggest mark here, being credited for creating the game alongside Peter Molyneux. Bullfrog's terraform-tastic battle of the deities created the god genre by itself – a true classic of the UK computer games industry, the playing of which is still akin to a religious experience.



POWERMONGER 1990
■ At the time, few people had seen anything like the geomapped 3D landscapes that this game offered. A game where you lead an ever-increasing army to glory, *Powermonger* is still an important milestone in the early history of the real-time strategy genre, even if the Amiga could barely contain it.



MAGIC CARPET 1994
■ This first-person flying game was a pioneer, and is still fun to just drift around in… but there's still decent a fast-paced action game here that's not much like anything else. The translucency and stretchy texture mapping were very important in the continuing development of 3D games.



DUNGEON KEEPER 1997
■ The classic reverse dungeon crawler, where the shoe's on the other foot. A fiendish masterpiece for all lovers of evil, a tremendously addictive game, and a subtle cube-based design that had a certain young Swedish games programmer taking notes.



BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA 2003
■ You take control of a big mech, and you're thrown into the middle of a whopping great war – that alone should be enough to get you rushing to the shops, so we hardly need to tell you that nothing is scripted and all those tanks are actually fighting each other.





» [Amiga] *Flood*'s kooky platform stylings make it an unusual but well-liked game.

> I designed a few of the levels for [Flood] – by this time I had switched to level design as a way of relaxing from coding… Glenn Corpes

we did for the original. We were using the Amiga's blitter, which meant it ran twice as fast and was capable of doing full screen rather than just a window, and we had Gary Carr and Paul McLaughlin doing the graphics, so it looked a lot better. *Populous II* had three years [of work] from two very good artists on it whereas the original had me for two weeks! Coding-wise though, it was still mostly Peter's work.

Was it crucial for *Populous II* to be a success?
I'm not sure but maybe not – we were making a living from the Amiga and ST versions of *Populous*, but I suspect that the PC version was good for us worldwide and it was also a launch title for the SNES in Japan, which was where the real money came from. Also, *Powermonger* had an initial shipment of 40,000 copies, which was a record for EA. Basically, the original was doing better than we could have hoped by the time *Populous II* was released so maybe not 'crucial' as such.

What was it like working on *Flood*?
For me, it was something going on in the background. I wasn't that involved with it beyond the ST port, which was just a case of rewriting the graphics routines. I designed a few of the levels for it too – by this time I wasn't working on graphics anymore and had switched to level design as a way of relaxing from coding.

You're credited as a level designer on *Syndicate*.
The game was based on a tech idea I'd had in-between *Populous* and *Powermonger* that would make scrolling easier through partial updates… it hadn't been used, but Sean Cooper liked the idea and it all went from there. I designed six levels for *Syndicate*, but I don't think they were that memorable – almost all of the levels were done by Alex Trowers, a very underrated designer at Bullfrog. It was definitely Sean and Alex's game.

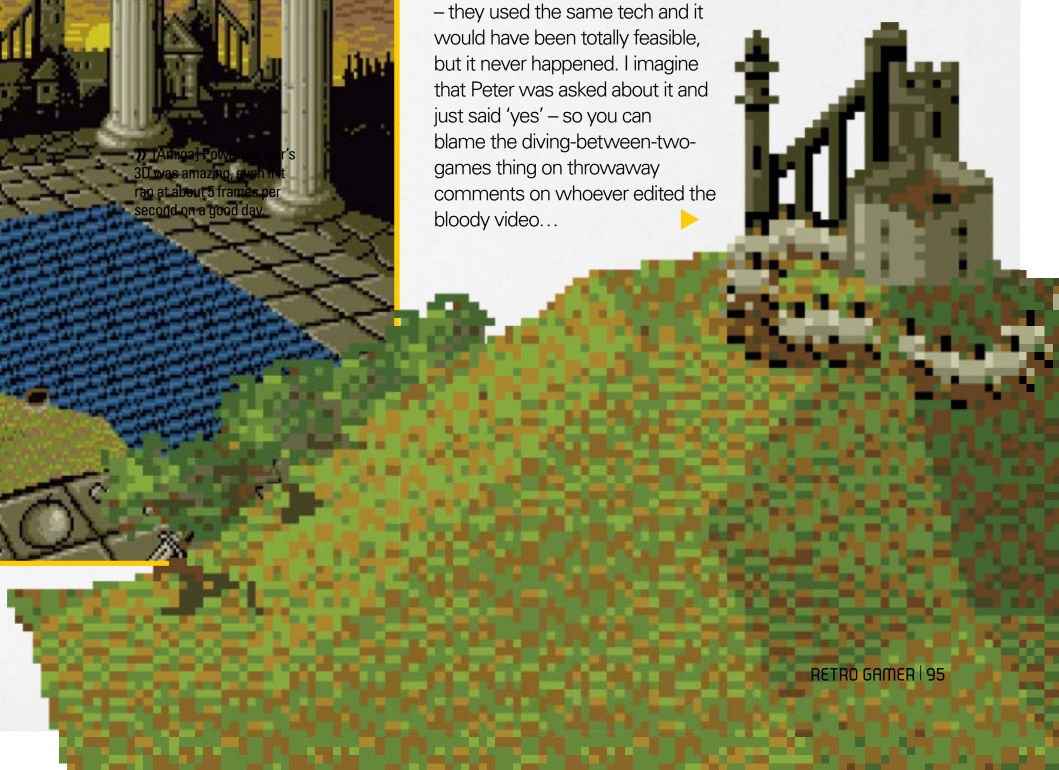
And on *Theme Park* you're given 'Special Thanks'.
I had virtually nothing to do with it except writing the sprite routine that had come with the PC version of *Populous II* that the game used. I was knee-deep in *Magic Carpet* at the time, plus a little bit of *Syndicate*.

So, *Magic Carpet*… were there any plans for the game to be on the Amiga?
An Amiga magazine came to the office once and because they'd always been good to us they got a tour. They were given screenshots of an early version of *Magic Carpet* that I'd been pissing about prototyping for a few years. There was never any Amiga plans as we'd lost interest, but the magazine published the screenshots and implied that it might be a CD32 game. I might have said to them that maybe it could have worked on there, and theoretically it could – but the CD32 was equivalent to a 16MHz 286 so it really couldn't have.

Dave Perry, on an episode of Gamesmaster, says that there's a version of *Magic Carpet* that turns into *Creation* when you go underwater…
At that time Guy Simmons was running *Creation*… one time us two and Les actually went up to Loch Ness to go into a submarine as part of research for the game – total bullshit! [Laughs]. That video was probably made as a part of selling Bullfrog to EA, and somebody who was editing it thought it would be fun to edit the two together – they used the same tech and it would have been totally feasible, but it never happened. I imagine that Peter was asked about it and just said 'yes' – so you can blame the diving-between-two-games thing on throwaway comments on whoever edited the bloody video… ▶

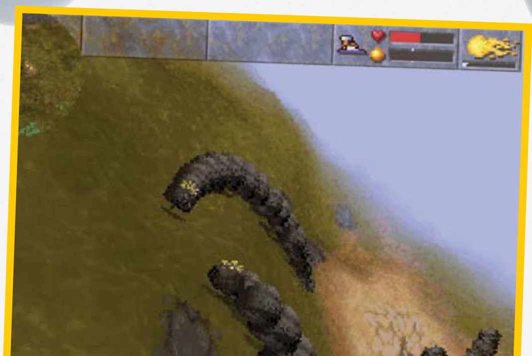


» [Amiga] Powermonger's 3D was amazing, even if it ran at about 5 frames per second on a good day.



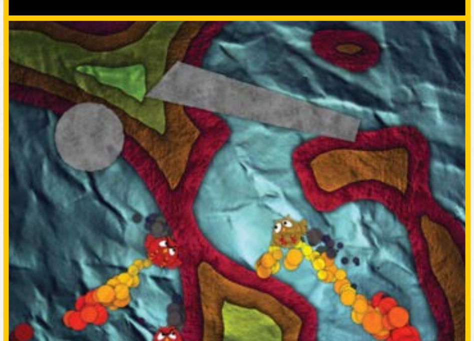


> There's lots of clever shit going on in Aquila behind the scenes – however, nobody cares! And you can't expect them to… Glenn Corpes



» [PC] *Magic Carpet*'s 3D graphics, all stretched textures and translucent effects, were amazing to see in 1994.





» [Mac] Glenn's upcoming game, *Fat Owl With A Jetpack*. It looks as gloriously beefy as you'd expect it to.

Did anything change when EA acquired Bullfrog in 1995?
The effect on the culture was tiny. Nothing changed apart from Peter spending more time out of the office – he had to spend a lot of time in the States and in Canada working with EA worldwide. One time it became apparent that EA weren't releasing anything for a whole quarter, which wouldn't please the investors – so Peter got us together and asked if we could work on something quickly, which is where *Hi-Octane* came from. It's an early version of the *Dungeon Keeper* engine that still has an undulating height under it, plus an editor that Sean Cooper had made for *The Indestructibles* on the same engine. We took all of that, and in seven weeks we turned it into *Hi-Octane* – it was knocked together in a panic, but it was fun.

***Dungeon Keeper* is one of the games that people associate almost totally with Peter…**
It was from an idea of Peter's, not speculatively designed like *Populous* or *Magic Carpet* were. When the game wasn't going the way he wanted it to, he stopped and rewrote it – he got his hands dirty and turned it into the top-down grid view version that was playable. I'm quite proud of it on the technical side and I think it's pretty cool, but it's definitely not one that Peter takes too much credit for – he put himself on the line for that one.

Did you spend the crunch period at his house?
No I didn't – I'd done the engine by then and was working on other stuff. I think I was getting too old by then to be in the gang at Peter's house, and as head of R&D it wouldn't have been appropriate for me to be out of the building.

How difficult did people find the crunch at Bullfrog?
You never had to be in at a specific time – if you'd worked until ten, you could show up at midday the next day. Some people took the piss, some worked extra hours, and some came in on weekends but only to play *Quake*! Crunch didn't seem horrible back then, but my perspective was slightly warped – when *Magic Carpet* was crunching I was working on *Dungeon Keeper*, and so on. I would be there to help out and show solidarity, but I was never one of the poor bastards who had to work 16 hours a day for two months to get it finished.

How shocking was it when Peter announced that he was going to leave?
It wasn't a surprise, but I don't know exactly why it happened. At that point Peter and I had a bit of a falling out thanks to an interview where the guy had basically walked in and said, 'Bullfrog's f**ked without Peter, innit?' I'd said that Peter hadn't always been completely involved with every Bullfrog game – that he had not been too involved with *Syndicate* or *Magic Carpet*, for example. [Peter] got really pissed off with me about that, although I thought it was a reasonable thing to say in that situation.

At that point did EA start to interfere more once Peter had left?
I was head of R&D at this point, and I interviewed a guy called Colin Robinson for CTO – essentially my boss. Colin's a nice guy, but I felt that my position at Bullfrog was undermined by somebody sliding in above me. Previously it seemed that everyone in a senior position had worked their way up, but then all these great people started to come in from outside. I think that EA didn't really know what Peter did – they thought, wrongly, that he ran everything in the studio, when he had typically been focused on one game at a time, leaving other people to do their thing with a little guidance here and there. So most of the senior people left within a year or so of each other, either to Lionhead or to form our own companies. It's not Peter's fault or even EA's fault, but



» [PC] Dungeon Keeper was a brilliant strategy game that cast you as the bad guy.

their reaction to Peter leaving was, 'Shit, we've got to throw some managers into the chaos.'

After Bullfrog, you formed Lost Toys with Les Edgar, Jeremy Longley and Darran Thomas. What work are you proud of from those days?
MoHo was a cool little game – inspired by *Marble Madness* but ending up with fighting robots. We also made *Battle Engine Aquila*. I really loved that game, but it illustrated a big problem – you were thrown into this big battle that you have to influence in your side's favour, where all these pure AI's are fighting each other. You're in the middle as a mech, you shoot strategically and change the balance of the battle, and that's how it works. Unfortunately it came out at around the same time as *Halo*, which was marketed as doing the same thing but they weren't doing it for real. They had three amazing tanks in a canyon, we had 50 bog-standard tanks on an island… there's lots of clever shit going on in *Aquila* behind the scenes – however, nobody cares! And you really can't expect them to. So that taught us a few lessons. But as a game, I think that *Battle Engine Aquila* is the best thing I ever worked on.

At the risk of sounding stupid, what's *Fat Owl With A Jetpack* all about?
I had this idea in my head for a weird *Lunar Lander*-type game where you use two buttons to control two thrusters. It needed a character, of course, and I was thinking how a couple of other 2D physics games had just shoved fat birds in there. I couldn't do the same could I? So what's my bird going to be, a fat owl with a jetpack? It's a couple of simple ideas nailed together and running at 60fps, and I'm writing the sort of game that I like playing. It's going to be on Mac and iOS and it's getting to the stage where it's playable and friends are helping me test it – I'm pleased with it, and I'm also hoping to get it out on PC, Android and Linux.

Are you still in touch with any of the old Bullfrog team, or with Peter?
I did a bit of work on *Curiosity* for Peter at 22cans, and ended up in the 22cans office for a year – we were talking again and it was all quite fun… it felt like early Bullfrog in some ways. We're still kind of friendly. I saw Alex at Develop recently, I still bump into people regularly, have a drink with Gary, Guy and a few others but I am rubbish at keeping in touch [with others]. I have got a lot of friends in the games industry but mostly people I have worked with more recently or other indies, but not many people that are ex-Bullfrog – they're all over the world now.

Any particular achievements that you're proud of in your career?
I'm proud that Notch [Markus Persson, *Minecraft* creator] has listed the *Dungeon Keeper* engine as an inspiration for *Minecraft*. There's technical things like getting translucency into *Magic Carpet* before that was common, but more than anything, I'm proudest of those three days on *Populous* when putting those blocks into the landscape actually became the basis of a whole game genre. I love that it wasn't by design, and that it came out of weird experimentation. It's a bit like Rubik's Cube – when Erno Rubik was making it he wasn't trying to come up with a puzzle, it was an engineering exercise that turned out to be amazing once the stickers were put on. And I'm really proud of *Fat Owl With A Jetpack* – I hope people give a shit about it like I do, although it's taken way too long! *

We would like to thank Glenn Corpes for taking his time to answer our questions. *Fat Owl With A Jetpack* will be thrusting its way onto iOS devices in a few months. More info on Glenn's current indie exploits can be found at glenncorpes.com, as well as @GlennCorpes on Twitter.

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

Your questions for god-like Glenn

ERIC: Any unfinished games you wish had been completed?

The Indestructibles would have been cool. It was like multiplayer *Quake* in that you'd get to know the level well. It didn't happen because Marvel said, 'Here's a list of several hundred superheroes. If any of yours are like ours… we'll be talking to you!'

ANTMEISTER: Whose idea was it to put the stereoscopic 3D mode into *Magic Carpet*?

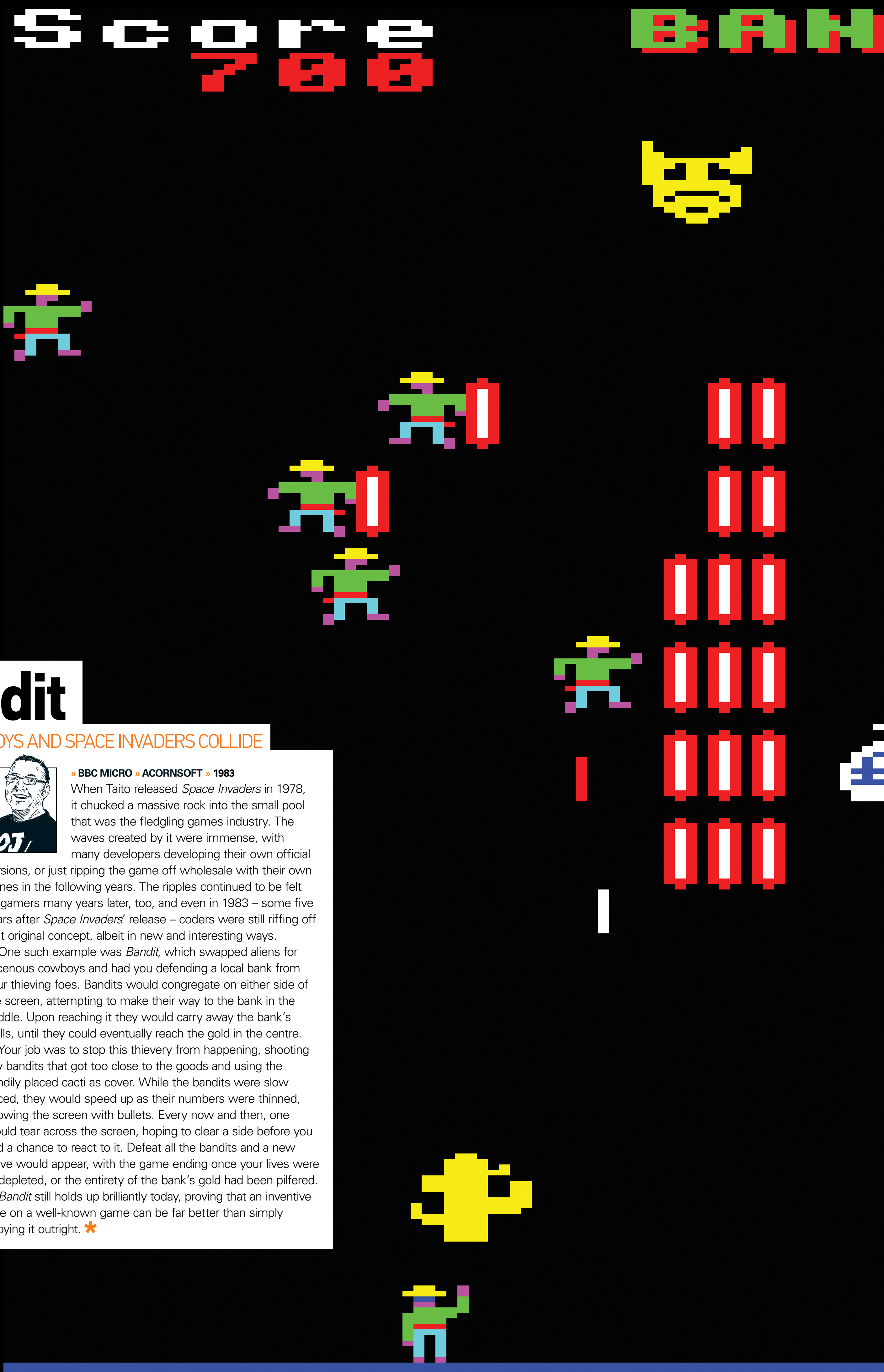
I wanted to see if I could do it! I'd done stereo 3D graphics on a CPC, weirdly. We also had a stereogram mode – it sort of works, but I got the maths wrong which was so annoying. You can play the game like it still, but some months after *Magic Carpet* there was a thing on *Tomorrow's World* where they had the first animated stereogram… but we'd just made a real-time playable one!

MERMAN: Which game engine had the most changes done to it?

If you count *Magic Carpet* as a game engine, which it effectively was, although it was never named an engine as such, then you can trace six released games to that – they all had the same low-level polygon renderer in common.

NORTHWAY: Did Commodore ever admit that they'd given machines to the wrong company?.

I wasn't there for Taurus… I know Les and Peter were talking to Commodore early on, and maybe they thought Taurus was a bigger company? A serial for one of the Amigas we had was #00006 though, and the first Amiga that Les and Peter saw was a pile of electronics…



» RETROREVIVAL

Bandit

WHEN COWBOYS AND SPACE INVADERS COLLIDE

» BBC MICRO » ACORNSOFT » 1983

When Taito released *Space Invaders* in 1978, it chucked a massive rock into the small pool that was the fledgling games industry. The waves created by it were immense, with many developers developing their own official versions, or just ripping the game off wholesale with their own clones in the following years. The ripples continued to be felt by gamers many years later, too, and even in 1983 – some five years after *Space Invaders*' release – coders were still riffing off that original concept, albeit in new and interesting ways.

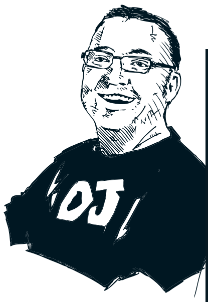
One such example was *Bandit*, which swapped aliens for larcenous cowboys and had you defending a local bank from your thieving foes. Bandits would congregate on either side of the screen, attempting to make their way to the bank in the middle. Upon reaching it they would carry away the bank's walls, until they could eventually reach the gold in the centre.

Your job was to stop this thievery from happening, shooting any bandits that got too close to the goods and using the handily placed cacti as cover. While the bandits were slow paced, they would speed up as their numbers were thinned, showing the screen with bullets. Every now and then, one would tear across the screen, hoping to clear a side before you had a chance to react to it. Defeat all the bandits and a new wave would appear, with the game ending once your lives were all depleted, or the entirety of the bank's gold had been pilfered.

Bandit still holds up brilliantly today, proving that an inventive take on a well-known game can be far better than simply copying it outright. *


DIT
High

RETRORATED



>> Pac-Man's back and confirms that he ain't afraid of no ghost, or reinventing himself for that matter. We also take a look at Nintendo's new Metroid game and see how the reboot of Master Of Orion has fared



» [PS4] Chowing down on a ghost train results in some exciting camera work.

Pac-Man Championship Edition 2

HE'S PAC TO DEFEND HIS TITLE

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS4
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX ONE, PC
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £9.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** BANDAI NAMCO
- » **DEVELOPER:** BANDAI NAMCO
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



One of the best things about *Pac-Man* is that it's so simple that any expansion of the basic concept can be novel and interesting, yet familiar enough to be widely appealing and easy to understand. *Pac-Mania*, the original *Pac-Man Championship Edition* and *Pac-Man 256* all stand as testament to that. That's why *Pac-Man Championship Edition 2* is such a surprise, as it's initially pretty overwhelming – and that's something that we're pretty sure that a *Pac-Man* game has never been before.

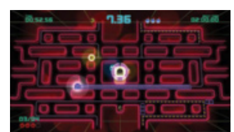
It's true that the core *Pac-Man* goals haven't changed much – you still eat dots and avoid ghosts, while seeking out Power Pellets to turn the tables on the ghosts. As in *Pac-Man Championship Edition*, eating fruit will refresh the maze with a new layout and a fresh set of dots to munch. Likewise, the sleeping ghosts that trail after the main ghosts when awakened return from *Pac-Man Championship Edition DX*, and devouring on a huge ghost train is still massively satisfying. But there's a lot that has been layered on top of this.

For a start, there's a mandatory tutorial that explains the game's new mechanics, the most counter-intuitive of which is ghost bumping. Ghosts are no longer immediately lethal to Pac-Man! Instead, you can smash into them a number of times before they'll become enraged (and deadly). How short-tempered Inky and his pals are depends on the game mode – sometimes one jolt will anger them, other times they'll gladly take a couple of knocks.

Another new mechanic is the bomb jump. A tap of the X button will send Pac-Man flying out of whatever predicament he's in and straight back to his starting point. You've got a limited supply of bombs, but you can replenish them by eating all of the dots in a maze – an act that is no longer mandatory, as fruit will often appear before all the dots have been eaten. Both fruit and Power Pellets can run away from you now, too.

» [PS4] When lots of jump pads are scattered around, stages can get pretty confusing.

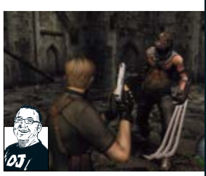




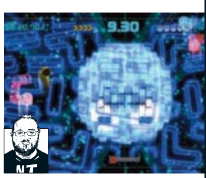
BRIEF HISTORY

» The neon-hued *Pac-Man Championship Edition* series has revitalised the classic Eighties maze game for a new generation of players, with new game mechanics and a focus on score attack gameplay. This is the third game in the series, following on from the 2007 original and 2010's *Pac-Man Championship Edition DX*.

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Resident Evil 4
I've lost count of the number of ports Capcom's game has had now. It's still amazing fun, though.



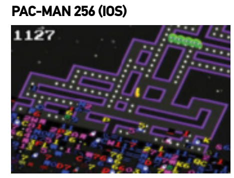
NICK
Pac-Man Championship Edition 2
Namco's new spin on *Pac-Man* is so much fun I can forgive its insane tutorials.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
PAC-MANIA (ARCADE)

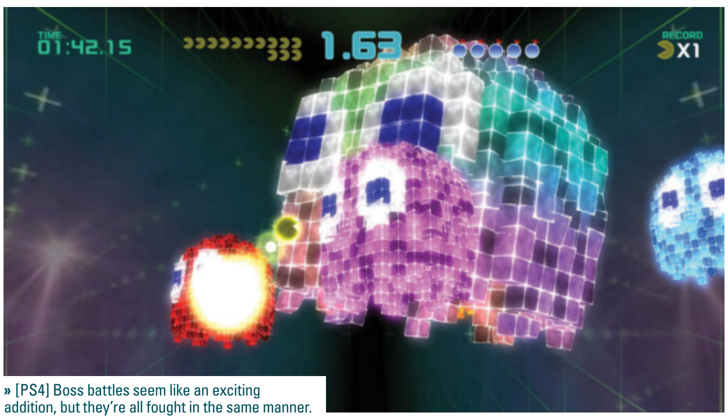


▼ SOMETHING NEW
PAC-MAN 256 (IOS)





» [PS4] Boss stages are marked by the menacing background presence of your current foe.



» [PS4] Boss battles seem like an exciting addition, but they're all fought in the same manner.



Moving on from a maze early does have one other big effect, and that's on your score. Every time you eat a dot, you'll score a point for every one you've eaten since you started your current life, up to a maximum of 500 points per dot. However, moving on from a stage early will set that count back by the number of dots remaining on the board. The incentive to clear early is that fruit are worth 1,000 points each, and you get access to Power Pellets more quickly.

The new mechanics make *Pac-Man Championship Edition 2* the fastest, most aggressive *Pac-Man* game to date. Level gimmicks, like jump pads, combine with the bomb jump to allow for our yellow friend to dash about the mazes with unprecedented ease, and you can barge enemies out of the way when you desperately need to get somewhere. It doesn't feel too much like the Eighties hit anymore, but it is exhilarating when you get into the zone and start racking up some seriously high scores.

As far as long-term appeal is concerned, you're given plenty of options. A variety of maze types are available in Score Attack mode, and after you've completed a selection of those you'll gain access to Adventure mode. This mode gives you a dozens of challenges to complete. In many of them you'll need to eat a certain number of fruit before the time runs out, but in the sixth world, you'll also gain access to challenges in which you must reach a target score. Also, once per world there's a boss battle. When you're fighting a boss, the gameplay is similar to standard play. However, the appearance of a fruit triggers the disappearance of all remaining dots, and in their place two extra lives are spawned. Every ghost becomes angry too. When you find a Power Pellet, you and all the Pac-Buddies you've collected will munch on the giant boss ghost in the background. Unfortunately, both the main stages and bosses are a little repetitive, with little variation beyond maze layouts to distinguish them.

If you loved the *Championship Edition* games, you clearly like arcade-style score attack games and you're likely to think highly of *Pac-Man Championship Edition 2* – there's every reason to do so too, as it's an attractive and compelling game. But even players of the original *Championship Edition* might find themselves drowning in the new features, and that's to say nothing of new players, for whom it's going to be a very long way from the inclusively simple gameplay of the original *Pac-Man* – and that might just be too daunting for people to stick with. *

In a nutshell

All the new mechanics mean that *Championship Edition 2* loses the intuitiveness of its predecessors. However, twitch gamers and high score fiends will love it, as it's a fast take on the classic maze game.

8
RetroGamer_Mag scored 8 for
Pac-Man Championship Edition 2
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

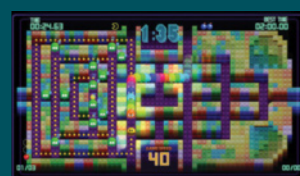
OUT WITH THE OLD

Three gameplay features from CE DX have been abandoned for the sequel…



SLOW-MOTION

Players of the previous game in the series will recall that if you got close to a ghost, the game would slow down and zoom in on the action to give you a better chance of reacting and thus escaping from danger. However, with the addition of ghost-bumping in the new game, there's no need for such a rescue mechanic here.



SPLIT MAZES

In the first two *CE* games, the mazes are comprised of two halves, which refresh both their dots and layouts independently of each another whenever you collect fruit. That's changed in the sequel as fruit will refresh the maze and the entire dot layout. As a result, you don't have to clear dots to generate fruit anymore.



BOMBS

In *Championship Edition DX*, bombs returned all of the ghosts to their home point, at the cost of lowering your multiplier and the game speed. In the new game, this has been replaced with the bomb jump which returns Pac-Man to his home point – which is great, unless that's where the ghosts happen to be congregating…

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download

Master Of Orion

» **System:** PC, Mac » **Publisher:** Wargaming » Cost: £22.99 » **Buy it from:** Online

Back in the Nineties, the *Master Of Orion* games introduced many players to space-faring 4X strategy, and it's fair to say that this series reboot from Wargaming and NGD Studios aims to do the same today. A lot of work has been put into giving this game high production values – the colonisation scenes are lovely and diplomatic negotiations feature excellent 3D representations of the ten *Master Of Orion* races, complete with full voice acting. It's fair to say that the Mrrshan, Silicoid and Sakkra ambassadors have never looked so good.

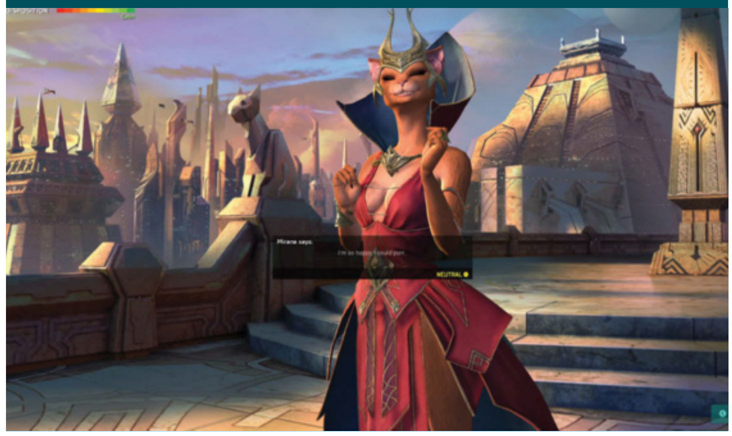
But beneath the modern presentation, it's still the familiar *Master Of Orion* experience of acquiring planetary colonies, then exploiting and defending them. The new game offers similar strategic options to the originals, but with some major streamlining. For example, you still manage a planet's output by assigning your population to different tasks, but these are now broken down into just three core functions. Research allows you to develop new technologies, production allows you to create buildings or ships and food growth allows you to grow and maintain the planet's population. Tactical combat is likewise strong without being bogged down in complexity, although you can auto-resolve encounters if you'd prefer.

For series veterans, the game will be a mixed bag. It's faithful to the older *Master Of Orion* games, but doesn't innovate heavily over them or other 4X games. What's more, some changes are likely to annoy veterans – the star lanes of *Master Of Orion 3* have returned, creating strategic choke points between star systems, and the inability to simultaneously build ships and reduce pollution on the same planet will rankle.

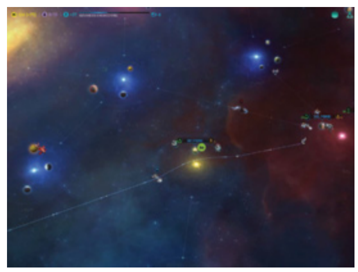
However, the streamlining makes 2016's *Master Of Orion* an accessible introduction to what can be a daunting genre – everything is clearly explained, including how to win via diplomacy, economics, conquest, research and more. Better yet, the spirit of the original is preserved, with 'just one more turn' often becoming a dozen or more.

8 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Master Of Orion
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

★ PICK OF THE MONTH



» [PC] We've pleased the Mrrshan representative here, so she'll do us a favour at some point down the line.



» [PC] Most of your gameplay time will be spent directing ships around this star map.



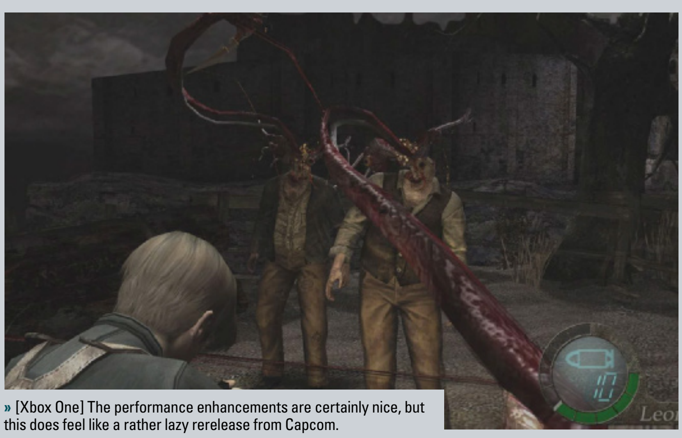
» [PC] Research unlocks new technologies, from production facilities to vile biological weapons.

Resident Evil 4

» **System:** Xbox One (tested) PS4 » **Buy it for:** £15.99 » **Buy it from:** Xbox Live, PSN

Considering backwards compatibility exists this latest rerelease from Capcom feels rather cynical. There's no denying that *Resident Evil 4* is a masterpiece in game design, and there's no denying that it's still tremendous fun to play, but it's a pity that Capcom has put so little effort into its 11-year-old masterpiece. It's effectively the PC version from a few years ago, meaning it runs at a smooth 60 frames-per-second (with the occasional drop) and features slightly updated textures, but somehow, it still manages to look surprisingly flat and lifeless compared to the superb offerings from Bluepoint Games. The game itself is as great as ever (although the clunky controls hobble it somewhat) but this port doesn't really do it justice. Here's hoping we get a proper remaster one day.

7 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for Resident Evil 4
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



» [Xbox One] The performance enhancements are certainly nice, but this does feel like a rather lazy rerelease from Capcom.

Metroid Prime Federation Force

» **System:** 3DS » **Buy it for:** £34.99 » **Buy it from:** Retail, 3DS eShop

We're as baffled as everyone else as to why *Federation Force* exists, but we're here to judge it on the game it is, not what it could have been. It turns out that *Federation Force* is actually a fun little online shooter, with lots of nods to the *Metroid Prime* universe, which is bound to please and frustrate fans in equal measure. The control system used is surprisingly good, using the 3DS's accelerometer to assist aiming (as *Splatoon* does on Wii U) although we're less of a fan of having to shoot ahead of certain enemies in order to hit them. *Blastball* is a fun three-on-three sports game where you bat a huge ball back and fourth, but it's the *Metroid Hunters*-styled campaign mode where most of the action resides. The end result is a solid, if rather uninspiring, shooter.

6 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **6** for Metroid Prime Federation Force
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

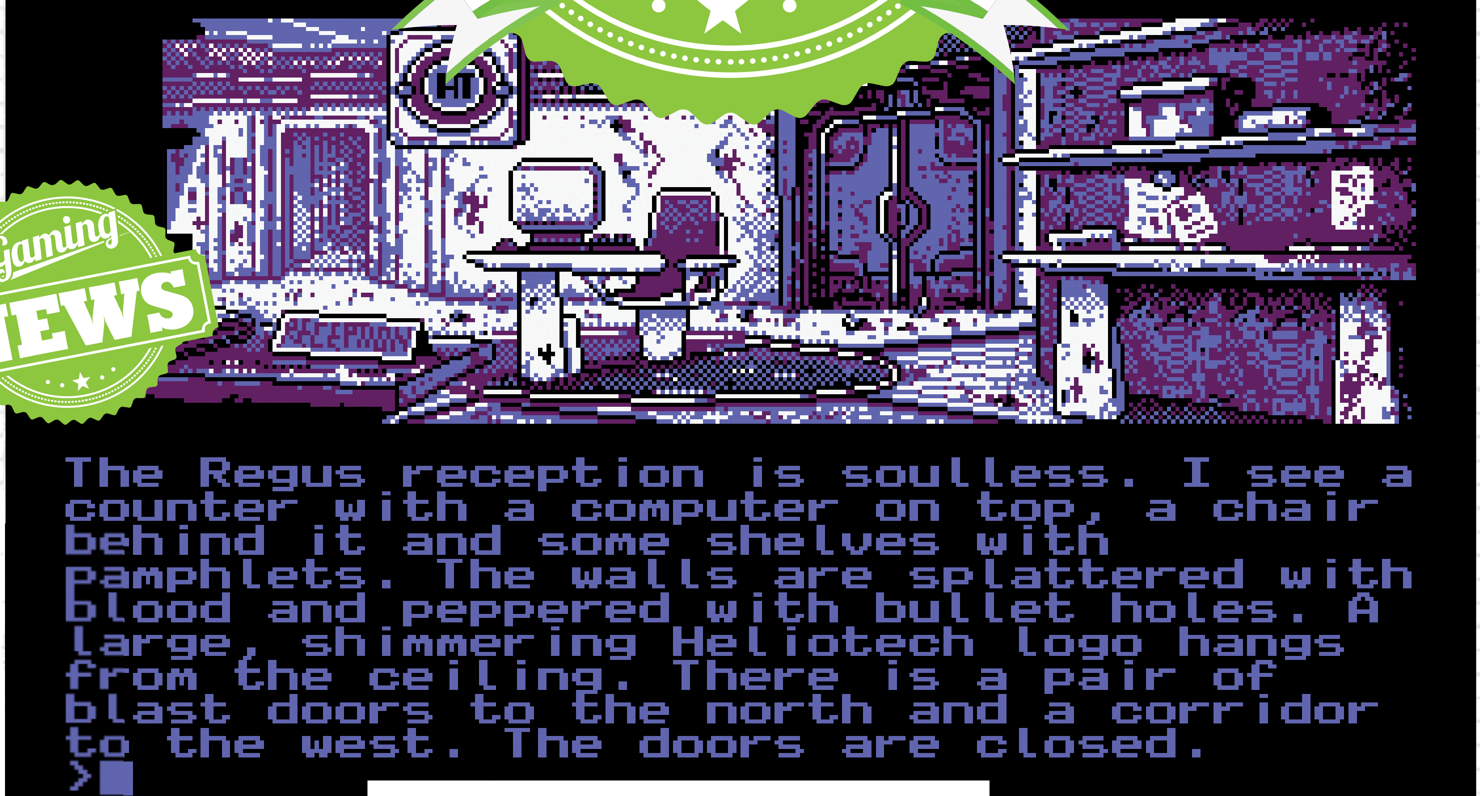


» [3DS] The online side of *Federation Force* is surprisingly good and it's extremely stable, too. *Blastball* is particularly good fun.

Gamers
HOMEBREW
Brewing since 2005

Gaming NEWS

» [Amstrad CPC] Not the most hospitable of environments.



MERCENARIES, NINJAS AND… TENNIS?



» [Mega Drive] Anyone for tennis?



» [Amstrad CPC] That looks like a difficult jump to make.

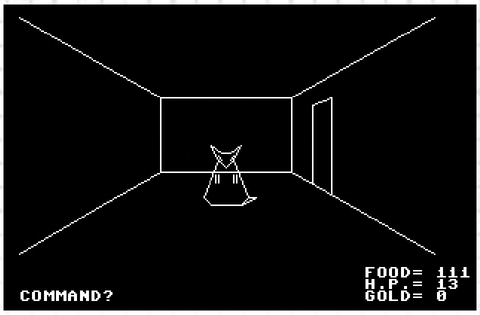
To begin with we've had a quick look at the prerelease version of a new Amstrad CPC text adventure called *Doomsday Lost Echoes*. The player steps into the shoes of Mike, a resident of one of the seedier parts of the galaxy, called The Pit, who has a dark side of his own having worked as all manner of things over the years, including stints as a bounty hunter, mercenary, hitman and scavenger. All of this experience means he's the right candidate to be looking into the disappearance of a worker at the nearby derelict space station Regus, especially since his client has paid in advance. Kikstart.eu/doomsday-le-cpc is a link to the work in progress thread at the CPC Wiki forum which has further information, screenshots of the game in action and some of the concept art. The final game requires a 128K CPC.

Staying with adventuring but turning to more platform-based action, we have *Golden Tail* for the Amstrad CPC where the story revolves around the titular mythical and powerful relic, which was stolen by the evil Shogun and utilised in a magical assault on Osaka castle. The artefact has been broken into 30 pieces in and around the castle which is now infested with vile creatures, but, in theory, it could be reassembled and used for good, so Kitsune the ninja spy – possibly the coolest job description ever – plans to do just that in order to bring peace to the land once more. Kitsune's grand adventure starts with a download from the developer's website which can be found hidden behind Kikstart.eu/golden-tail-cpc.

Finally, *Papi Commando Tennis* for the Mega Drive doesn't have any of that adventuring nonsense to worry about because, as the name almost certainly suggests, it's a tennis game – and a surprisingly cute one as well. Following Kikstart.eu/papi-tennis-md will take you to the programmer's ongoing development thread at the Atari Age forums and, because the game itself is still a work in progress, there are a number of different builds to try as elements have been added. There aren't many sports games being worked on at the moment but, from what we've played in the latest version at least, it seems that this could be a decent release when it's finished and the graphics and sound are already pretty solid too. Mega Drive fans might want to give the latest version a try and perhaps pitch in some feature ideas as well?

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at: **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk**



» [C64] Serving up a slice of role-playing history.

THE OLDE TIMES

Developed by Richard 'Lord British' Garriott, *Akalabeth: World Of Doom* was the forerunner for his later *Ultima* series and considered to be one of the first examples of a role-playing game on computer. It was released in limited quantities for the Apple II but now *Dungeoneer Games And Simulations* has surfaced, with the original author's blessing and some magic from programmer Wanax, ported the original program to the C64.

For C64-owning adventurers who want to play this slice of converted history, the dungeons at Kikstart.eu/akalabeth-c64 have the download you seek.

> "Dungeoneer Games And Simulations has surfaced, with the author's blessing"



» [Spectrum] Up to gnome good with the mower.

MOW A MEADOW

A reworking of a different kind is Brendan Alford's *Manic Mower* for the ZX Spectrum. The original game was released 24 years ago on a *Sinclair User* cover tape, but this updated version has been written in assembly language.

The player must guide their mower around to cut the lawn while avoiding gnomes, walls and the dog with the gameplay feeling like a cross between the 'classic' *Advanced Lawnmower Simulator* and Jeff Minter's *Hover Bovver*. Kikstart.eu/mower-spec goes to the World Of Spectrum forum announcement thread where the download can be found.

HOMEBREW HEROES

We were playing Gábor 'Skoro' Varga's Plus/4 game Pac-Pac last issue and started wondering about why he decided to have a stab at redesigning Pac-Man… so we tracked him down to find out!



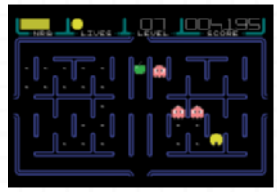
THE BIG INTERVIEW · GÁBOR VARGA ·

***Pac-Pac* is based on *Pac-Man* but isn't a straight copy, why is that?**

I wanted to create a *Pac-Man*-like game for a long time. Everyone knows the original, but I didn't want mine to be a complete copy. The main goal, instead, was to create something that's similar to the original, but not exactly the same. I tried to add as many thing as I could to change things, and still keep the game enjoyable. The differences can be seen not only in gameplay, but also in the title, instead of *Pac-Man* its *Pac-Pac*.

Does redesigning a game in this way make it easier or harder to write?

There aren't too many games for the Plus/4, so it wasn't too hard to come up with something new. The graphics were done by Róbert Kisnémeth (Kichy) and the music was done by Csaba Pankaczy (Csabo). Kichy also did a large part of the game's design and flow. Besides them, Luca Carrafiello (Luca) and Tamás Tettinger (Chronos) helped with playtesting. They supported the game with their ideas and suggestions. I can say that no matter what type of problem I ran into during the game's development, I could always count on them, therefore reaching completion wasn't hard.



» [Plus/4] Being chased in circles by a ghost.

Roughly how long did the game take to design and program?

I received some great help from Róbert Kisnémeth when designing the game. We discussed and planned out even the smallest details. Planning the graphics, music, sound effects, and the gameplay engine took about one week. Programming it took longer, and it was done on the original hardware. Some of the original plans had to be changed, but this did not have an effect the game's final form. Everything included, development was around two months, plus an additional week of testing.

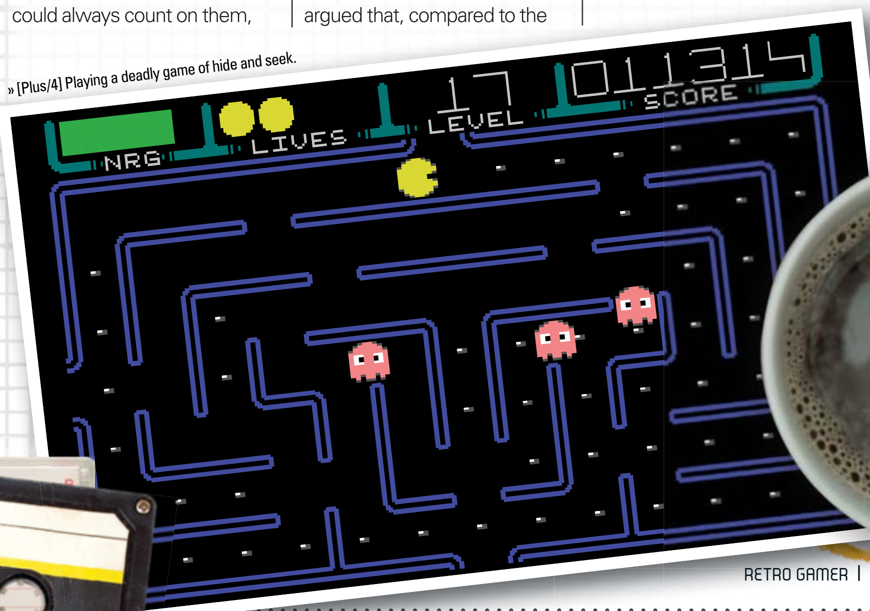
What kind of feedback have you had so far from players?

I received mostly positive feedback. A lot of people liked the graphics, music and playability. A few people argued that, compared to the original, my version was a bit unusual at first, but after a few minutes of playing, they still called it enjoyable and entertaining. One other suggestion was that we could have added a bonus level after every five levels.

Can you tell us what you're currently working on?

I'm developing a logical game, and I'm working with the same people who helped me with my previous games *Xplode Man*, *Memento*, *Clone* and *Get It*. I have other long-term plans as well which are mostly platformers, but since these are only plans I don't want to reveal much more about them just yet.

» [Plus/4] Playing a deadly game of hide and seek.





·DO YOU· REMEMBER?

Space Invaders is one of the most cloned games in homebrew circles, but getting it right is more difficult that it might seem. And despite building all of the graphics out of PETSCII characters, *PET Invaders* for the 40-column versions of Commodore's PET is a very playable copy and reasonably close to the original to boot.

The group of invaders trudge their way across the screen, pause at the edges to stop and move downwards towards the ground and then start back in the other direction while the player weaves their gun base between enemy bullets to pick off assailants one by one. As always, there are barriers to soak up bullets and the occasional UFO which can be blasted for bonus points. This classic invasion starts behind Kikstart.eu/invaders-pet.



» [PET] Just that one straggler left to go....



» [PET] The Invaders are back, but more... text-based than before!



Gaming REVIEWS



» [Apple II] When you have found the shrubbery, you must place it here, beside this shrubbery.

ANCIENT LEGENDS

» **FORMAT:** APPLE II » **DEVELOPER:** SETH STERNBERGER » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ANCIENT-LEGENDS-A2 » **PRICE:** FREE

Merkania is in a terrible state, its various communities were already wary of each other but now there are vicious creatures roaming the lands; dwarves, warriors of assorted flavours, sentient vegetation, the undead and… well, bards are making life more difficult than usual for the residents. Our hero Quinn hails from the small Merkanian island of Thane where his family have happily lived in isolation for generations and, although the blight has already spread to his land almost as a warning of how badly things are on the mainland, he wants to go on an adventure.

The player's view of Quinn's exploration around Merkania changes between a two-dimensional view when roaming around the larger map and 3D for exploring the various settlements, while the combat is turn-based with groups of creatures queuing patiently for their swipe at our hero. How each battle plays out depends on how well armed our hero is, the number of assailants he's facing and their current strength, but the odds of victory can be improved by taking some of the gold collected from vanquished foes after each battle and spending it. The villages have establishments selling conventional or magical weaponry, armour and there's usually a healer who will happily rejuvenate her customers as well if the money is right.

There's quite a lot of territory to cover and we enjoyed exploring around the villages, castles and wider map while occasionally bumping into foes during our travels, but there are a few bugs, at least in the version we're playing. In the towns it's possible to get stuck in a loop if the player is too close to a shop when entering another dwelling – the game cycles back and forth between the shopkeeper and random battles without exiting either – and we also managed to trigger a couple of fatal 'out of memory' errors on occasion. Careful movement and saving regularly limits how much damage these issues cause, but hopefully there'll be a bug fix to deal with them properly and we will update readers should that happen.



» [Apple II] King Yrral wanted house by the sea, apparently.



» [Apple II] It's good to be the king... even if he's really grumpy!

RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for
Ancient Legends
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



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FANTASY WORLD DAISY

» **FORMAT:** WINDOWS » **PRICE:** FREE
» **DEVELOPER:** STEVE 'GRANDAD' RENNIE
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/FANTASY-DAISY-WIN

It's said that history is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon. And although we all thought that we knew the story behind *Fantasy World Dizzy*, it seems we were misled because, according to *Fantasy World Daisy* at least, it was Dizzy who needed rescuing! This version of the tale isn't quite as family friendly either, escaping the rather familiar first dungeon is achieved in a similar manner to the original game, except that the all-important jug needs to be found and filled from a less sanitary source.

In fact each of the puzzles requires the player to first locate and then use the correct item and doing so will often need a little lateral thinking, but some light reading should yield a few helpful clues. Fans of the *Dizzy* series and the title this has been based upon in particular should enjoy working through this game.

8 RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Fantasy World Daisy
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

» [Windows] Feel free to insert your favourite egg-based pun here, reader!





» [Windows] Helping Daisy to solve some of these puzzles can prove eggasperating!

TOURMALINE

» **FORMAT:** SINCLAIR SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** RETROSOULS
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/TOURMALINE-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

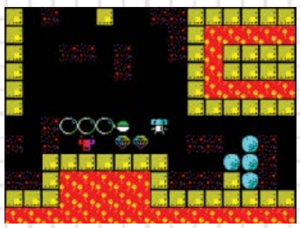
Tourmaline crystals are sought after but hard to find and the inhabitants of the planet which has an abundant supply are less than hospitable when it comes to treasure hunters, so an anti-gravity suit and copious supplies of explosives are a must.

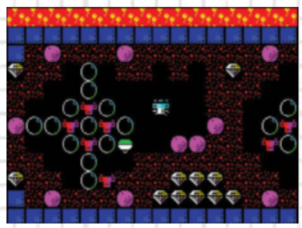
This release is a cross between *Boulder Dash* and *Bomberman* so either blowing up or dropping a boulder on a nasty works and the player is tasked with deciding on the best approach in each situation. Should a pile of boulders fall to block the way they can be cleared if there's enough space to plant a bomb and get out of its blast radius.

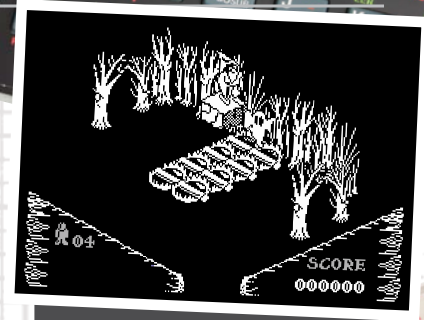
The early levels are easy so players can acclimatise to the quite sensitive controls and how objects will react to being undermined or exploded, but soon the more challenging maps start appearing and success will require good dexterity and some advance planning.

8 RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Tourmaline
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

» [ZX Spectrum] Feeling a little 'boulder' now most of the nasties are dealt with.







ROUNDUP

We've previously mentioned Rod & Emu's C64 port of the Atari 8-bit conversion of Spectrum classic *Pentagram* but it's recently received an upgrade. Along with some great new music and sound effects from composer Saul Cross come faster update routines for the graphics and support for the Turbo Chameleon – which is, amongst other things, a processor accelerator – to make the game more responsive. We've updated Kikstart.eu/pentagram-c64 so it contains the latest version.

Christian Clarke's latest Amiga game has recently been released for the CD32. *Super Robin* is a scrolling platformer where the titular, red-breasted bird must explore the large levels to gather a quota of fruit. There are hazards, of course, so Robin's way can be barred by other birds, ghosts or oversized insects. Pop on over to Kikstart.eu/super-robin-cd32 for more.

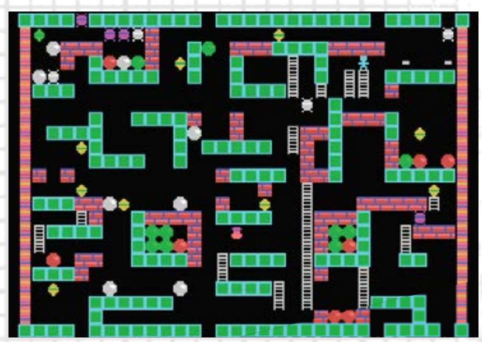
BUBBO WORLD 2

» **FORMAT:** MSX » **DEVELOPER:** N.I » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BUBBO-2-MSX » **PRICE:** FREE

What would happen if the classic games *Boulder Dash* and *Lode Runner* were to have a child? The chances are it would be *Bubbo World 2*! The objective is to collect lots of gold but there are constantly rolling boulders and roaming aliens to either avoid or shoot and some of the walls can be blasted either by bullets or enemies as they explode. There's no jumping, but one of the fire buttons will launch a ladder upwards which can be used to reach otherwise inaccessible places.

Like its predecessor this is a pretty simple game and the small graphics make things rather fiddly – they may be to the same scale as *Lode Runner*, but the coarse movement and busier playfield make keeping track of everything far more difficult – and the game is frustrating overall, but for those players who either like a challenge or swearing it should be amusing.

7 RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for Bubbo World 2
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE





» [MSX] When you hear temptation call it's your heart that takes the fall.

» [MSX] Running for cover, but is there anywhere safe to hide?

MAILBAG

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STAR LETTER

UNBELIEVABLE, JEFF!



» This isn't actually a bad idea, especially since old football games quickly tumble in value.

Hi guys,
I particularly enjoyed a feature you ran a few years back on the *Kick Off* series. I was never really a fan, but find it fascinating that there were so many iterations, some of which were utter shit.

This made me think of gaming in my youth, particularly around football games. These days it is largely a two-horse race, but back in the mid-Nineties there were dozens of football games, with many exclusives. I was always a *Sensi* fan, but I remember friends playing *Striker, Super Soccer* and even the god awful *USA '94* game. There was, of course, the early *FIFA* games that first mesmerised me on the hanging TVs in Woolies, making me yearn for a SNES. It turned out I was better off just sticking with *Sensi*.

I digress. With this thought in mind I have embarked on a mission. I have attempted to collect every football game for every format, and through some sort of sadism, decided that I should play all of them. I'll be honest, I probably haven't quite got them all yet, but I have a very large number, including imports and the likes of *Soccer* on the Interton and *John Barnes European Football* on CD32. I also have a couple of arcade cabs, so I can even include the likes of the pleasantly-playable MVS titles. I'm going to begin on the SNES and have amassed 24 games to get me going.

Beyond sharing this ridiculous plan, I thought I would let you know as I plan to document my exploits and possibly attempt to review my experiences. I'm also planning to get others involved to share the burden.

I've attached some pics. The amount shown is nowhere close to the full selection that I have already collected!

Mark Potter

It's definitely amazing how diverse the market used to be compared to today – we definitely have fond memories of *Ronaldo V-Football,* an underdog in the PlayStation market. Your dedication is impressive. Have a prize!

EXPLOSIVE JUSTICE

Hi all,
Just writing in to ask if you would consider doing a feature on *Dynamite Cop* for the Dreamcast? I recently dug it out for a bit of nostalgic fun and forgot how much I loved this game. I am pretty sure it got terrible reviews but it is a great *Streets Of Rage* knockoff with over-the-top weapons, cheesy dialogue and multiple routes to complete the game. What is not to love about beating a bad guy with a fish or firing an anti-tank gun into someone at point-blank range and watching them get back up again!?

Simon Davis

We've got a soft spot for both *Dynamite Cop* and its predecessor *Die Hard Arcade* – they're both resolutely old-school brawlers, and all the better for it. Both games were directed by Makoto Uchida, a Sega veteran we've previously interviewed regarding *Golden Axe* and *Altered Beast,* so the possibility for a feature is definitely there.

POCKET POWER

Hi **RG**,
Thanks for your excellent review on the handhelds that defined a generation. I had the Game Gear, which I enjoyed as a kid, despite the fact its batteries would die in a matter of minutes, due to its size and processor and being Master System-compatible with an adaptor. I used to play games such as *Secret Command, Robocop Versus The Terminator* and *G-Loc*, to name but a few.

I just hope somebody out there will bring the Lynx handheld out from retirement for a new generation, as *S.T.U.N. Runner* was a fun game to play at the time of its launch back in the day!

Cisko Kidd

Glad to hear you enjoyed the feature, and we agree that it'd be amazing if someone did launch a modern Lynx. Imagine that power and those excellent arcade conversions, but with the benefits of today's technology allowing for a smaller unit with improved display and battery life. We are practically salivating.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Robot Wars

Call us big kids, but having this show back on TV has really scratched an itch – there's something immensely satisfying about watching metal contraptions tear chunks out of one another. Plus, Carbide brought back fond memories of Hypno-Disc by tearing through the heats before falling at the last hurdle. Classic.



Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

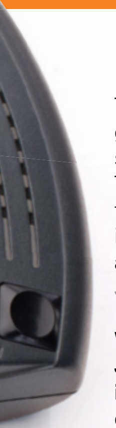
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OVER HERE, STRANGER!

Hi **RG**,

This is the first time mailing you guys so I'm not too sure how they're supposed to go but I just have a query. The shop I purchase the magazine from has sold out of all this month's issue. Is there a way I can order online and have it delivered or pick it up?

Josh Boyle

We get a fair few questions like Josh's email here, so we thought it might be a good idea to remind everyone. You can order the print edition of Retro Gamer directly from Imagine Publishing at imagineshop.co.uk, or if you prefer a digital copy of the magazine, greatdigitalmags.com should be your port of call. Of course, if you want to guarantee your monthly copy and save a bit of cash too, don't forget that you can also become a subscriber.

QUICK, CHANGE THE CHANNEL!

RE: Your discussion of *Yes, Prime Minister* – I wish there were more games based on British sitcoms, and thought out things not just cheap cash-ins a la *Little Britain: The Video Game*. Yes, there was The *Young Ones*, and *Supergran* and later on a *Fawlty Towers* game in 2001. But one of the missed opportunities with the BBC Micro is that it wasn't very BBC.

Yes, we got games based on *Grange Hill* and *Doctor Who*, but in an age where we even got tie-in games of ITV hits such as *Blockbusters*, why didn't we see a holiday camp-management game based on *Hi De Hi*. And not just sitcoms – perhaps an *All Creatures Great And Small* vet simulator and *'Allo 'Allo*, like *Castle Wolfenstein* but with a middle-age bloke in a pinny. Yes, I know, we got a platform game based on the series in 1993 on the Amiga, but it needed to work as a parody of other war games in the same way that the series was a pisstake of Secret Army.

Are there any British TV shows the **Retro Gamer** crew would have liked to have seen as games?

George White

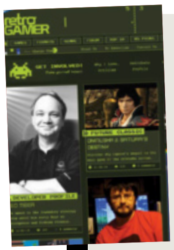
This one prompted a fun discussion! We think *The Interceptor* could have made for a great game. Other things that came up included a *Dizzy*-style *Red Dwarf* adventure and a *Geordie Shore* survival horror game. But the prize had to go to Luke for his vision of a *Keeping Up Appearances* on-rails shooter.



» [Dreamcast] Makoto Uchida is described by colleagues as 'eccentric' – we have no idea why.



» [ZX Spectrum] Just don't make us play *Neighbours* again, okay? We're thoroughly done with that.



From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite GameCube memory



theantmeister
I'd actually gone out to buy a PS2, but I saw the 'Cube in the Video Game Centre in Salisbury running *Rogue Squadron* and I had to have it. I walked out with the console, *Rogue Squadron* and *Luigi's Mansion*. I eventually did buy a PS2, but I still like the GameCube just that little bit more.

Mayhem
I bought an import Japanese Cube from Lik-Sang (before they got 'giant enemy crabbed' by Sony) with region toggle installed to switch it over to US settings. When the Cube arrived, the switch didn't work, so it was stuck in US mode. So I asked Lik-Sang to send me a screw bit so I could take the case apart and fix it myself!

Big Shoes
I got the Purple GameCube on release day, with *Rogue Squadron*, I love the console. 15 years later, I have five GameCubes, purple, black, white, silver and orange, Game Boy Player, Wavebird controller and about 60 games.

ncf1
The GameCube was a system I missed out on, and when I finally made a secondhand purchase I was blown away at how good it was and wondered why it escaped my attention.

Antiriad2097
Much like people's memories of the N64 with *GoldenEye*, for me the GC was my 007 system. *Agent Under Fire*, *Nightfire*, *Everything or Nothing* and *From Russia With Love*, all hugely enjoyable games that made me *feel* like Bond.

stvd
Groundbreaking! How many other consoles came with their own carry handle!

merman
My GameCube was a Christmas present, and I still remember setting it up that Christmas afternoon. So many great games, so many memories. *Wind Waker*, *Super Mario Sunshine*, the *Donkey Konga* games. Plus many more hours spent fuelling my *Tony Hawk* addiction.

Megamixer
I feel a bit bad for anybody wanting to get into the system today! Used prices for the games are ridiculous. So glad I own or have played everything worth owning bar one or two titles.

kiwimike
The first one I bought from that particular gen for one specific reason: The *Resident Evil* remake. *Eternal Darkness* is also another terrific dark game on the system.

retro GAMER

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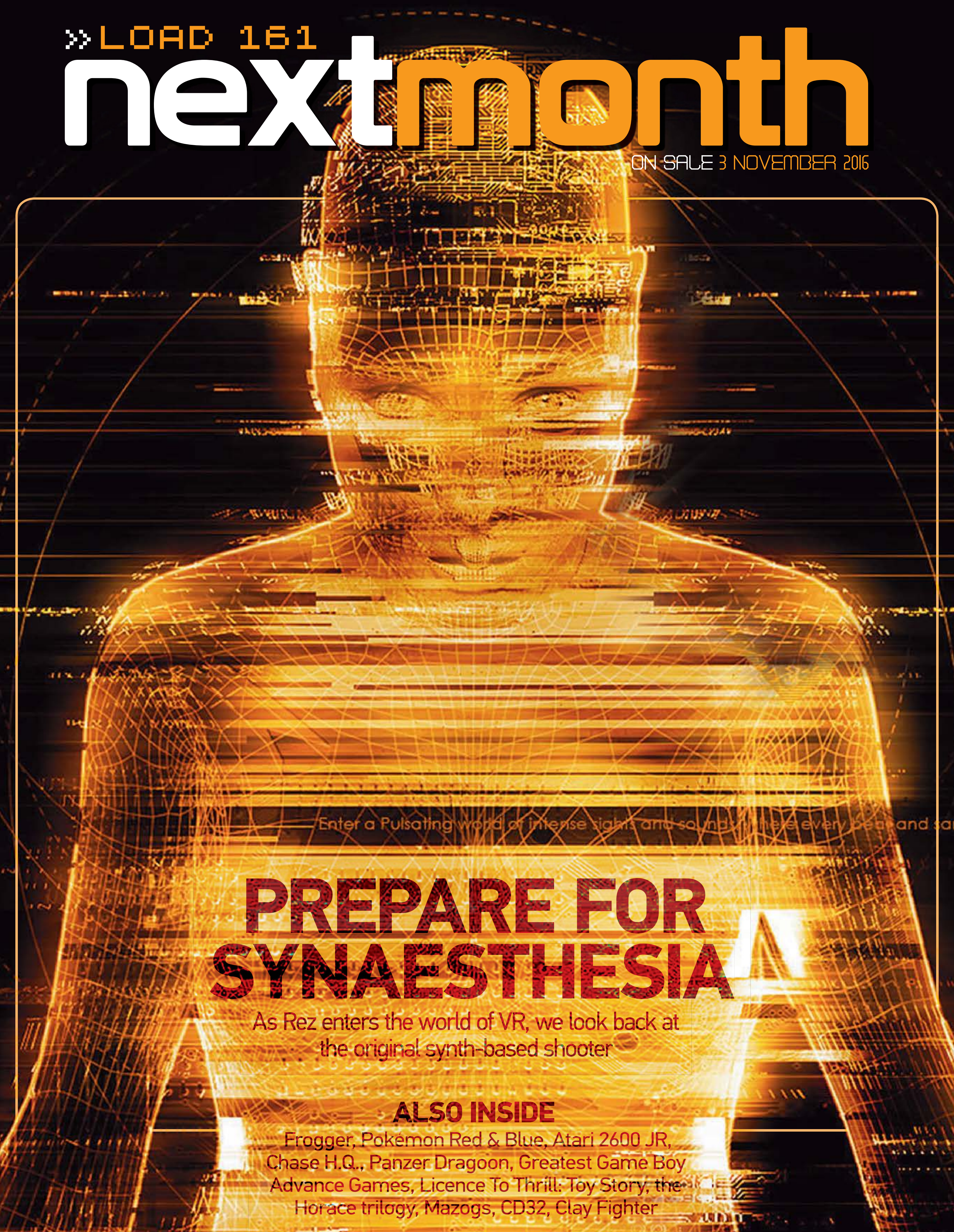
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PREPARE FOR SYNAESTHESIA

As Rez enters the world of VR, we look back at the original synth-based shooter

ALSO INSIDE

Frogger, Pokémon Red & Blue, Atari 2600 JR, Chase H.Q., Panzer Dragoon, Greatest Game Boy Advance Games, Licence To Thrill: Toy Story, the Horace trilogy, Mazogs, CD32, Clay Fighter


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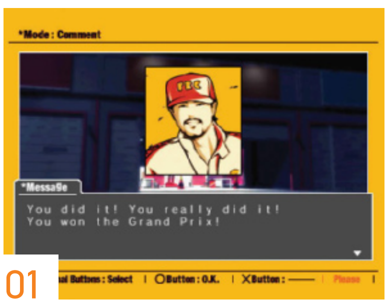

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ENDGAME



RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

» After years of unquestioned dominance in the PlayStation racing field, Namco finally received a challenge to answer in the form of Gran Turismo. The developer's response was Ridge Racer Type 4, a superb game which also had hundreds of cars to collect but favoured arcade thrills and bizarre stories over simulation. Here's what happens if you bring home the gold for Pac Racing Club…



01

» After stealing first on Shooting Hoops and securing the Real Racing Roots '99 championship for your team, manager Shinji Yazaki pops up to congratulate you. It feels like vindication, given that this guy hated you to begin with.



02

» Your performance seems to have genuinely moved Yazaki, as he ended up popping over to the finish line to see it. What's more, the fact that you crossed it at all has a special significance for your manager, for one simple reason…



03

» He never crossed that finish line himself, though. In fact, he was involved in a collision here in 1986, which scuppered his race and resulted in the death of his teammate, Giuliano Enki. The incident has haunted Yazaki for years now.



04

» Having fulfilled his promise to his teammate to win the Real Racing Roots grand prix, Yazaki breaks down in tears. But whether it's a case of fragile masculinity or simple denial, he shrugs off his very real and somewhat justified emotion as being for "cry babies". It's okay to cry, Shinji!



05

» After years of being hounded by the press over an incident he'd rather forget, Yazaki has finally achieved something he'd like the world to know about. The reporters are only interested in the ace driver that won the championship, though, so go out and claim the glory. You've earned it.


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